Bengaluru Wednesday, January 28, 2026 Pages 16 Vol 79 No 28 ₹7

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DECCAN HERALD

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India concludes talks on its largest FTA ever with EU

Deal likely to be implemented by the end of 2026: Piyush Goyal

BIG GAINS FOR NEW DELHI AFTER 'MOTHER OF ALL DEALS'

- **93%** of Indian shipments will enjoy duty-free access to the EU countries
- EU to eliminate or lower tariffs on **99%** of Indian goods
- Indian textiles, apparel, leather, footwear, marine products, gems and jewellery, handicrafts to get duty-free access to EU markets
- India to cut tariffs on **97%** of imports from EU nations
- Import duty on luxury cars like BMW, Mercedes-Benz to be lowered from **110% to 10%**
- Tariffs on wines to be cut from **150% to 20%;** olive oil from **45%** to nil; Bread and confectionary from **50%** to nil

GYANENDRA KESHRI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

India and the European Union on Tuesday announced the conclusion of negotiations on the free trade agreement (FTA), which is likely to be implemented by the end of this year, paving the way for elimination or reduction of tariffs on a majority of traded goods.

As part of the deal, the 27-nation bloc EU has agreed to lower or eliminate tariffs on over 99% of goods imported from India. On the other hand, India has agreed to cut tariffs on 97% of imports from EU nations.

While negotiations for the deal, which were first launched in 2007, has concluded, it may take several months to get the deal signed and implemented.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said the pact is likely to be implemented by the end of 2026. "It will be taken up for a legal scrubbing on a fast-track basis. We do hope that we should be able to celebrate the entry into force of this agreement within calendar 2026 itself," Goyal told reporters.

PM Narendra Modi with European Council President Antonio Costa (left) and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in New Delhi on Tuesday. PTI

> Today, India has concluded the largest free trade agreement in its history. It is a happy coincidence that on the 27th day of the month, India is entering into this FTA with the 27 member states of the European Union.
>
> **Narendra Modi,** Prime Minister

> We have created a free trade zone of 2 billion people, with both sides set to gain economically. We have sent a signal to the world that rules-based cooperation still delivers great outcomes,"
>
> **Ursula von der Leyen,** European Commission President

> It will be taken up for a legal scrubbing on a fast track basis. We do hope that we should be able to celebrate the entry into force of this agreement within calendar 2026 itself.
>
> **Piyush Goyal,** Commerce and Industry Minister

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa jointly announced the conclusion of the deal at the 16th India–EU Summit.

"Today, India has concluded the largest free trade agreement in its history. It is a happy coincidence that on the 27th day of the month, India is entering into this FTA with the 27 member states of the European Union," Modi said in a joint statement after the summit.

▸ FTA, Page 6

Pact to counter global turbulence

ANIRBAN BHAUMIK,
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday joined the European Council President António Luís Santos da Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and sought respect for multilateralism and international norms, even as New Delhi announced a defence and security partnership with the 27-nation bloc and signed a Memorandum of Understanding on mobility.

The two sides launched negotiations for a Security of Information Agreement (SOIA), which will pave the way for a stronger defence cooperation.

"Today, the global order is undergoing profound turbulence, and the partnership between India and the EU will strengthen stability within the system," Modi said.

"The respect for multilateralism and international norms remains a shared priority. We are united in our view that reform of global institutions is essential to address the challenges of our time," he added.

With the launch of the defence and security partnership and conclusion of negotiations for the FTA, India and the EU on Tuesday signalled a strategic convergence even as both have been navigating growing commercial and geopolitical tension with the US.

▸ Deal, Page 6

Cheaper therapies, autos and wine, a lot to cheer | Gear up to drive cheaper European luxury cars | 'Indian IT firms eye opportunities in EU' | FTA to give competitive edge: Tiruppur exporters — Page 12

State may set min wages higher than Centre's slab

SUJAY B M
BENGALURU, DHNS

The state government is likely to proceed with its move to provide a minimum wage of Rs 23,276 to unskilled labourers in zone 1 (Bengaluru and districts with municipal corporations), even as the Union government's code on wages proposes a significantly lower minimum wage.

The labour department has sought the law department's opinion before finalising the proposal.

Labour Minister Santosh Lad told *DH*, "The power to set minimum wages is with the state government. We have proposed Rs 23,000 as minimum wage and are committed to it. After consulting the CM, once the legislature session concludes, we will fix it."

While other district centres fall under zone 2, taluk centres will come under zone 3. The department proposes a minimum wage of Rs 21,251 for unskilled labourers in zone 2, while unskilled labourers in zone 3 will get Rs 19,319. On Friday, the labour department published the draft code on wages (Karnataka) rules, 2026.

▸ Wages, Page 6

K'taka likely to withdraw RTE Act amendments

Need to earmark Rs 500 cr if reversed, says edu minister

BENGALURU, DHNS

Karnataka is likely to withdraw amendments made to rules that prioritised admissions under the Right to Education (RTE) Act in government and aided schools, which watered down the 25% reservation in private schools for children from the economically weaker sections.

Speaking to *DH*, School Education and Literacy Minister Madhu Bangarappa said that several Congress leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, were particularly concerned about it.

"Now, there is a Supreme Court order which directs all states to implement 25% RTE quota in private schools effectively. I will bring it to the notice of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah," he said.

RTE admissions

2012-13	1,22,000
2014-15	92,543
2015-16	1,00,067
2017-18	1,09,001
2018-19	1,16,273
2019-20	1,312
2020-21	3,680
2021-22	4,755
2022-23	1,512
2023-24	2,306
2024-25	3,412

However, as withdrawing the amendments will have financial implications, the opinion and decision of the Finance Department will also be taken into account, the minister added.

"We need Rs 500 crore to pay towards reimbursements to private schools if 25% seats are filled under RTE Act," Bangarappa said.

▸ RTE, Page 6

'Unless action hurts accused, it won't work': SC on acid attacks

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed all states and Union Territories to provide information, including year-wise data on acid attack cases, their status in courts, and the rehabilitation measures to support victims. A bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices R Mahadevan and Joymalya Bagchi stressed the need for a harsher approach, saying reformative theory has no place in such crimes.

Details on Page 10

Govt to consider metro to Doddaballapur

BENGALURU, DHNS: The government is revising the Comprehensive Mobility Plan and a metro line to Doddaballapur will be considered, Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda told the Assembly on Tuesday.

Details on Page 3

Domestic workers steal valuables worth Rs 18 cr

MANJUNATH SHETTAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

A couple from Nepal allegedly decamped with gold, diamond jewellery, silver articles and cash worth around Rs 18 crore from the house of a city-based builder in Marathahalli, the police said.

According to the FIR, the family had employed a few domestic workers, including Ambika, a cook, and Dinesh and Kamala, who assisted with household chores.

On Sunday, at around 9 am, the family left the house to attend a family programme. At around 12.30 pm, Ambika called the owner and informed her that the house had been ransacked and valuables stolen.

When the family returned, they found that lockers on the ground and first floors had been broken.

The police said Dinesh and Kamala allegedly fled with 11.5 kg of gold and diamond jewellery, 5 kg of silver articles and Rs 11.5 lakh in cash.

Details on Page 3B

Man spins 'ED' tale, cheats woman on matrimony site

PRAJWAL D'SOUZA
BENGALURU, DHNS

Claiming he was embroiled in an Enforcement Directorate (ED) case, a stranger, posing a businessman, cheated a city-based woman of Rs 50 lakh.

The 32-year-old victim claimed to have met the suspect, Vijayaraj Gowda, online through 'Vokkaliga Matrimony' on September 16. They exchanged their profiles and contact information.

Interestingly, this same Vijayraj Gowda alias Vijesh B (32), a civil engineer from Kunigal, was arrested by Kengeri police last week for cheating a 29-year-old techie from Whitefield of Rs 1.53 crore by claiming to be "successful businessman", using the same ED case ruse and promising to marry her.

The woman later found that he was married and has a child.

"He is out on bail and is being pursued for the current case for further legal action," a senior police officer told *DH*.

▸ Matrimony, Page 6

DEMAND UP

B'luru homes see 28% rise in power use in 6 yrs

DH EXCLUSIVE

SNEHA RAMESH
BENGALURU, DHNS

Rapid growth has increased Bengaluru's appetite for electricity, with commercial and residential consumption shooting up by 32% and 28%, respectively, in the six years since 2019, according to data accessed by *DH*.

While commercial usage of power has been growing at a faster pace compared with the residential sector, the latter continues to consume more units of electricity, the data between 2019-2020 and 2024-25 shows.

In 2024-25, Bengaluru's residents consumed close to 59% of the total power supplied to the city.

An improvement in purchasing power of people and standard of living is one of the main reasons for the increasing consumption of electricity by the residential sector, Bescom officials said.

"Now, no one wants to live any less. From home theatres to air conditioners, the number of people opting for a more comfortable lifestyle has increased. Also, the purchasing power has increased. As a result, power consumption has skyrocketed in many households," a senior Bescom official said.

In addition to existing consumers using more power, the rise in consumption is also fuelled by an expanding Bescom user base.

▸ Power, Page 6

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Railways launches 3 weekly trains between Bengaluru & Bengal

BENGALURU, DHNS: The railways has begun operating three new weekly trains connecting Bengaluru to poll-bound West Bengal.

Starting January 21, train number 16523 departs from SMVT Bengaluru every Wednesday at 10.15 am and reaches Balurghat at 4.15 am on Fridays. In the return direction, train number 16524 leaves Balurghat every Saturday at 5.15 am and arrives at SMVT Bengaluru at 3 am on Mondays.

Starting January 22, train number 16223 departs from SMVT Bengaluru every Thursday at 1.50 pm and reaches Radhikapur at 12.45 pm on Saturdays. In the return direction, train number 16224 leaves Radhikapur every Sunday at 9.30 pm and arrives at SMVT Bengaluru at 8.45 pm on Tuesdays.

Starting January 24, train number 16597/98 departs from SMVT Bengaluru at 8.50 am every Saturday and reaches Alipurduar Junction at 10.25 am on Mondays. In the return direction, train number 16598 leaves Alipurduar Junction at 10.25 om every Monday to arrive at SMVT Bengaluruat 3 am on Thursdays.

The train services run with 22 coaches.

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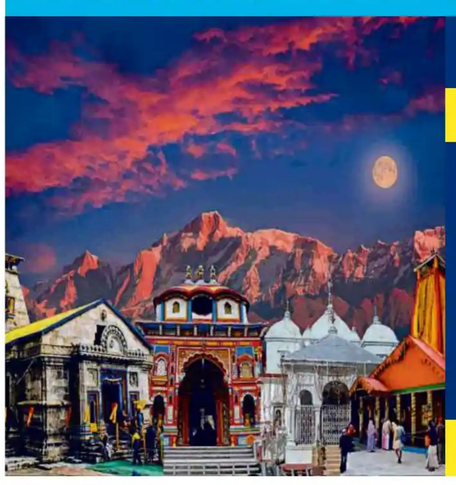

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Dates: APR 19, 22, 25, 28. MAY 4, 7, 10, 13, 19, 22, 25, 28. JUN 4, 7, 10, 13, 19, 22, 25, 28. JUL 4, 7, 10, 13.

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Dates: APR 22, 29. MAY 6, 13, 20, 27. JUN 3, 10, 17, 24. JUL 8, 22. AUG 5, 19. SEP 2, 9, 16, 23. OCT 7.

Badri - Kedar Yatra

8 Days

Haridwar, Rishikesh, Guptakashi, Kedarnath, Badrinath, Mana, Rudraprayaga

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Badri - Kedar Yatra

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AI pitched as tool to tackle domestic violence

Experts flag enforcement gaps, family stress for persisting issue

DR ASHOK DALWAI, Chairman of ISEC

"Gender stereotypes must be broken as they are used by the patriarchal system. Women should be change agents and stop tolerating abuse from male relatives, including fathers, brothers, and husbands.

BENGALURU, DHNS

Karnataka recorded 17,813 domestic violence cases in 2024, revealed data presented at a research and policy forum titled "Addressing Domestic Violence: Phase 2", hosted by the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bengaluru, and Deakin University, Australia.

Experts said lingering effects of Covid, poor parenting, and weak law enforcement have contributed to persistent domestic violence.

The forum aimed to encourage evidence-based discussions and collaborations among researchers, policymakers, NGOs, government departments, and the wider community to develop strategies to prevent and address domestic violence in India.

Dr Lata Satyen of Deakin University presented United Nations Women 2025 data, which showed that 60% of female homicides are committed by intimate partners or family members, and 11% of male homicides occur within the family.

Reena Suvarna, Assistant Commissioner of Police, Whitefield Division, said, "Among the cases we receive, the woman's situation does not matter.

"Women may be educated or financially independent, but abuse would still occur."

"During counselling, we find that 90% of cases are from broken families," Reena added, highlighting the role of parenting.

Dr VS Elizabeth, Professor of History at National Law School of India University, said, "Boys need to be raised (in such a way that) they do not think women can be abused. Why do they think it is acceptable to drink and abuse their wife or children? Children often grow up to become abusers rather than breaking the cycle."

Dr Elizabeth noted that while the law contains many provisions, enforcement is lacking, and offenders exploit loopholes to escape punishment.

Dr Ashok Dalwai, Chairman of ISEC, said, "Gender stereotypes must be broken as they are used by the patriarchal system. Women should be change agents and stop tolerating abuse from male relatives, including fathers, brothers, and husbands."

Dr Channamma Kambhar, Assistant Professor at ISEC, suggested the use of AI to help victims of domestic violence. "Help is just a click away, yet most cases go unreported. With advancing technology, AI should be adopted to address domestic violence cases."

Public sector bank operations in city hit by nationwide strike

BENGALURU, DHNS

Banking operations at public sector banks in Bengaluru were disrupted on Tuesday, following a nationwide strike called by the United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU).

The umbrella body of nine unions, representing officers and employees, observed a day-long strike demanding, among other things, the implementation of a five-day work week.

While branches of several public sector banks, including the State Bank of India, Canara Bank and Union Bank, remained open, most wore a deserted look as a majority of employees participated in the strike.

To ensure emergency services, some branches pressed employees from other districts into service.

Although banks had issued advisories warning customers of possible disruptions on January 27 due to the strike, many customers remained unaware and returned disappointed.

Services requiring physical presence, including cash deposits and withdrawals and cheque clearances, were affected.

"I wasn't aware of the strike. After three days of bank holidays, I was eagerly waiting to visit the bank today as I have an urgent matter to attend to," said Dinesh, a mechanic.

Senior citizens, who rely heavily on staff assistance for deposits and withdrawals, were left confused after security personnel asked them to return on Wednesday.

Unaware of the strike, several customers returned disappointed from public sector bank branches on Tuesday.

Staff demands

Key demands of the employee unions include a five-day banking week, regulated working hours, and revision of pension and insurance benefits.

2nd Pink Line train to dispatch on Friday

BENGALURU, DHNS: The second driverless train for Namma Metro's Pink Line is expected to be dispatched on Friday, sources familiar with the matter said.

The six-coach train is getting the finishing touches at BEML's New Thippasandra manufacturing unit and will be dispatched to the Pink Line's depot in Kothanur, Bannerghatta Road, on Friday.

Namma Metro plans to open the Pink Line's 7.5-km elevated section (Kalena Agrahara-Tavarekere) in May with five to six trains.

The prototype train, rolled out on December 11, is conducting trial runs on the Pink Line. The BMRCL aims to obtain the necessary approvals for the new rolling stock in time for the May opening of the elevated section.

S. E. RAILWAY – TENDER

Tender Notice No. : DRMENGGRNC-01-2026. Divisional Railway Manager (Engg), Ranchi-834003 for & on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders for the following work. **Notice No. : DRMENGGRNC-01-2026. Name of work** : Installation and Commissioning of VHF based Approaching Train Warning System (RAKSHAK) over SER including maintenance for two years. (As per RDSO specification). **Tender Value :** ₹ 8,36,62,230.38, **EMD Value :** ₹ 5,68,300/-. **Tender Closing date & time:** 09.02.2026 at 15.00 hrs. Tenderers can visit the website **www.ireps. gov.in** for online tendering. **(PR-1100)**

S. E. RAILWAY – TENDER

Divisional Railway Manager/Engg., Chakradharpur acting For & On behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against Open Tender. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. **Sl. No., Tender Notice No. & Name of work** are as follows : **1. CKP-WEST-25-26-39.** Execution of zonal works for residential buildings under Jharsuguda settlement under SSE(Works)/ Jharsuguda for period ending upto 30.06.2027 (2nd Call). **Tender Value :** ₹ 1,61,00,000/-. **EMD :** ₹ 2,30,500/-. **2. CKP-SOUTH-25-26-28.** (I) Through Sleeper Renewal (Primary){TSR(P)} by PQRS machine/Manually including deep screening work. by BCM/Manually, Execution of Cess repair, construction/ repair of drain & other miscellaneous P-Way related works for 22.650 Tkm in Padapahar-Nayagarh & 7.586 Tkm in Barajamda Jn.-Bolanikhadan Section. (II) Through Sleeper Renewal (Primary){TSR(P)} by PQRS machine including deep screening work by BCM, Execution of Cess repair & other miscellaneous P-Way related works for 2.850 Tkm in Rajkharsawan Jn. - Padapahar (DN) Section, under the jurisdiction of Sr. DEN(South)/ Chakradharpur. **Tender Value :** ₹ 5,00,35,324.47. **EMD :** ₹ 4,00,200/-. **3. CKP-SOUTH-25-26-29.** Through Turnout Renewal (TWS) for total 269 sets in different yards of Rajkharsawan Jn.-Padapahar, Padapahar-Nayagarh, Padapahar-Bolanikhadan & Barajamda Jn.-Gua section under the jurisdiction of Sr. DEN (South)/Chakradharpur. (2nd Call). **Tender Value :** ₹ 2,14,78,912.46. **EMD :** ₹ 2,57,400/-. **Cost of Tender form :** ₹ 0 for each. **Date of opening** : 12.02.2026 for Sl. No. 1 and 16.02.2026 for Sl. No. 2 & 3. The tender can be viewed at Website **http://www.ireps.gov.in** The tenderer/ bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate & must be registered under on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/ bidder can participate on e-tendering. All relevant paper must be uploaded at the time of participating in e-tendering. **Note :** e-Tender Forms shall be issued free of cost to all tenderers. (Authority-Rly. Bd.'s letter No. 2020/CE-I /CT/3E/GCC/Policy dtd. 16.07.2020). **(PR-1095)**

Forest officers get permanent posting at KIA to prevent wildlife trafficking

BENGALURU, DHNS: For the first time, four Deputy Range Forest Officers will be deployed year-round at the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) to prevent wildlife trafficking.

This order came into force on January 26, in coordination with the Customs Department, after receiving permission from the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security, according to the Deputy Conservator of Forests, Bengaluru Rural Division, Devanahalli.

"Earlier, most cases detected at the airport were booked under the Customs Act, which generally resulted in a limited scope for comprehensive investigation.

"With the presence of Forest Department officers, cases can now be registered under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. This enables detailed investigation, including tracing backwards and forward linkages, dismantling organised trafficking networks, and identifying the actual kingpins, rather than restricting action to carriers or couriers," he said.

22 wildlife smuggling cases

In the past year, the Customs Department booked 22 cases for illegal import/export of wild animals from Southeast Asian countries, mainly Thailand and Malaysia.

Of these, 19 were imports and three exports. Commonly trafficked species include gibbons, iguanas, and various birds.

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Agriculture Beyond Production: Department of Agriculture; Silver Jubilee Hall, Kristu Jayanti University, Kothanur; 9.30 am.

CULTURAL

Professor K Ven Rajagopal's 100th Birth Anniversary: Karnataka Natak Academy; MES College Auditorium, 15th Cross Road, Malleswaram; 3.30 pm.

Music Festival: Vocals by Dilip Simha; BTM Cultural Academy; Sri Ramana Maharshi Academy for the Blind, JP Nagar; 5 pm.

61st Naadjyoti Music Festival: Nadajyoti Sangeetha Sabha Trust; Sriram Mandir, East Park Road, Malleswaram; 5.30 pm.

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST
Mist

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	29.4°C
Minimum	16.6°C
Rainfall (as of 8:30 am)	--
Humidity (as of 5:30 pm)	98%
Sunset (Jan 28)	6:18 pm
Sunrise (Jan 29)	6:46 am
Moonrise	12:44 pm
Moonset	00:59 am

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

Seshadripuram Educational Trust, Seshadripuram College and Seshadripuram Group of Institutions celebrated the 77th Republic Day on Monday, with flag-hoisting by Nagathihalli Chandrashekar and speeches by Dr Wooday P Krishna and president NR Pandith Aradhya. The programme featured reports by the NCC officer, a special NCC drill, the singing of the national anthem, and a cultural programme.

Labour dept forms gig workers' welfare board

Aggregators, workers to register with agency

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Labour Department on Tuesday formed a 16-member welfare board to provide social security for gig workers, making way for aggregators to deposit their share of welfare fee to the board. All aggregators will have to pay a welfare fee in the range of 1-1.5%.

The Karnataka Platform-based Gig Workers Welfare Board is being set up as mandated in the Karnataka Platform-based Gig Workers' (Social Security and Welfare) Act, 2025.

The board comprises five members from the government - Labour Minister (currently Santosh Lad) will be the ex-officio chairperson, senior officials of Labour, IT and Commercial Taxes Departments, and Chief Executive Officer of the Board, who will be the ex-officio member secretary.

It also comprises four representatives of gig workers from unions, four representatives from aggregators, two members with expertise on gig economy and a technical expert in fields like data storage and information technology.

Now, both aggregators and gig workers will have to register with the board. Within 45 days, the aggregators have to register themselves and share the data of all gig workers registered onboarded with them. Each gig worker will be allotted a unique ID, through which the board will disburse social security schemes.

Alongside the welfare fee collected by aggregators and the contributions of gig workers, grants provided by state and central governments will also be a part of the welfare fund.

Yettinahole project: Institute to study wildlife management

It will suggest preventive, mitigation and other measures

BENGALURU, DHNS

A seven-member team under the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) will come up with a plan to mitigate and manage wildlife conflict arising out of the Yettinahole project, which has been blamed for the conflicts in Hassan division.

Over the last five years, conservationists have said that man-animal conflicts in Hassan division have increased, affecting the everyday life of people and animals.

According to the data from the forest department, the number of wildlife conflict incidents reported hovers around 4,500 every year, with elephants accounting for nearly 80%.

The plan consists of preventive, mitigation and other measures in Hassan and Tumakuru divisions as per the framework approved by the forest department.

From building overpasses/underpasses to "development and management of soft release centres for elephants rescued from Hassan landscape", the plan seeks to address the complaints from the people in the affected area.

A file photo of delivery chambers constructed as part of phase-1 of Yettinahole project at Hebbanahalli near Sakaleshpur in Hassan district.

The WII team of over eight people will try to address the matter at the landscape level to consider the areas affected by the project. The plan, therefore, includes developing an elephant camp to house kumki elephants for managing the conflict situations. It also seeks to improve sloth bear habitats in Hassan and Tumkur.

Violation of forest rules

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has sought action for the violation of rules in 266.79 acres of forest during the execution of the Yettinahole project in the Hassan division.

The report by the deputy inspector general of forests noted that the violation in the Idahalli Amruth Kaval and contiguous Naikanakere Amrut Mahal Kaval of 10,000 acres were forests that were notified in a gazette notification of 1898. A joint survey in 2024 showed that the entire area of 10,000 acres formed part of a protected forest.

In its defence, the state government stated that the violation occurred between March 2018 and December 2019. "However, scrutiny of satellite imageries by this office, before and after 2/2/2019 (year of lodging FIR) revealed that the majority of the violations occurred during 2010-2022."

Further, the officer said the government has not provided documents to back its argument that the majority of the 266 acres was not recorded as forests but as agricultural lands in the revenue records.

Govt revising Bengaluru mobility plan, to consider Doddaballapur metro

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Karnataka government is revising the Comprehensive Mobility Plan (CMP) for Bengaluru, and a metro line up to the fast-growing industrial suburb of Doddaballapur will be considered, Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda told the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday.

Gowda was responding on behalf of Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, who is in charge of Bengaluru Urban Development, to a question by Doddaballapur BJP MLA Dheeraj Muniraj.

The MLA sought a metro line connecting Doddabballapur, about 40 km from the city, via Yelahanka and Rajanakunte.

"Although Doddaballapur is located in the Bengaluru Rural (now Bengaluru North) district, it is witnessing rapid development. A KWIN City is coming up on 5,400 acres and Foxconn is functioning with over 45,000 people. Layouts are coming up," Muniraju said.

Gowda said metro rail connectivity is being provided up to the Kempegowda International Airport under Phases 2A and 2B. "Work is underway and it'll be completed by the end of 2027," he said.

"Metro connectivity to Doddaballapur via Yelahanka has been under discussion for a while now. The government has already approved Phases 3 and 3A, which don't cover the Doddaballapur line," Gowda pointed out.

Gowda said the government was revising the CMP, which was prepared in 2020. "We're revising the CMP to reflect changes that have taken place in Bengaluru," he said.

The demand to provide metro connectivity to Doddaballapur will be referred to an expert committee tasked with revising the CMP, Gowda said.

"This will be considered for metro lines after Phase 3A," he said.

Rajeev Gowda remanded in judicial custody till February 9

CHIKKABALLAPUR, DHNS: The Shidlaghatta Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) court on Tuesday remanded Rajeev Gowda - the Congress leader arrested in connection with threatening a government official - in judicial custody till February 9.

Michael, an industrialist from Mangaluru who was arrested on the charge of giving shelter to Gowda, was granted bail. Gowda is now lodged in sub-jail at Chintamani. The court heard the arguments and counter-arguments till 7 in the evening and rejected the prosecution's plea seeking police custody. The court also rejected the interim bail application filed on behalf of Gowda.

The Chikkaballapur police arrested Gowda and Michael at Malappuram district of Kerala on Monday. They were brought to Chikkaballapur early on Tuesday and were interrogated at police guest house. Both were produced before the court after medical examination at district hospital.

The Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) has expelled Rajeev Gowda, accused of abusing CMC commissioner, from the party on disciplinary grounds. The decision was taken after the KPCC disciplinary committee examined complaints in detail.

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Serving up goli baje and Maddur vade in Davos

Chef Manu Chandra was invited to set up a pop-up kitchen on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum

RASHMI RAJAGOPAL
TEAM METROLIFE

Among the many stalls lining the main promenade of Davos, Switzerland, during the World Economic Forum (WEF), was one that many Bengalureans would find familiar.

Chef Manu Chandra's Single Thread Bespoke Catering was invited to set up a pop-up kitchen at the recently concluded event, which saw the likes of Donald Trump, Elon Musk, Emmanuel Macron and Volodymyr Zelenskyy in attendance. "The warm, spice-forward food we served was just what visitors at the snow-covered town in the Swiss Alps needed," says Chandra, who returned to Bengaluru last weekend.

Sub-zero temperatures, an unfamiliar kitchen and using local ingredients to plate up authentic Indian food were some of the challenges Chandra had to contend with. "I carried some dry ingredients from here, but I wanted to work with ingredients that were available locally," Chandra explains.

Chandra's menu focused on three different regions of India. On the first day, the menu covered South Indian food and featured innovative interpretations of Karnataka classics. 'Maddur vada crostinis' were topped with white asparagus palya. White asparagus, called white gold, is seasonal and priced three to four times higher than green asparagus. He also served up a bonda soup made with goli baje, local tubers, Swiss chard and dal. Pulimunchi with salsify, a root vegetable with a mild oyster-like flavour, was served over bowls of rice. To ferment the batter for a dosa-inspired taco in Davos' freezing temperatures, he had to wait two-and-half days.

On the second and third days, the menu offered a mix of popular and experimental dishes from India's eastern and northern states.

However, this was not his first time at the WEF. "My first time was about 3-4 years ago. But this time around, it felt a lot more significant because the world is in a tumult with the Ukraine-Russia war, the emergence of AI, and Trump's politics. The fact that so many world leaders were present made it quite a monumental edition," Chandra states.

Walking around Davos during the event, one is bound to run into familiar faces from the political and business world. While Chandra is sure his food reached quite a few world leaders, he prefers not to name them. However, he recalls a conversation he had with Rishi Sunak. "I told him I am a great fan of the British sitcom 'Yes Minister' and he joked and said, "I'm sure history was your favourite subject in school," he reveals.

Manu Chandra (right) and his team worked with locally available Swiss produce for a fresh twist on Karnataka classics.

POPCORN

Ji sir

With the budget session about to begin, the ruling coalition and the opposition are preparing to cross swords over V B G Ram G (earlier called MNREGA) and SIR. Whatever your opinion about these developments, you can't deny they teach you how to be respectful. Ram G and SIR could be SIR G when you speak about them in a single breath. And that's what you will be saying when you go asking for employment and citizenship rights. Please, please, SIR G.

Govt intervention yet to help delivery workers

Last week, the centre asked quick commerce apps to relax rules on delivery time

SHRADDHA A K
TEAM METROLIFE

Following protests over worker safety, the Union Labour Ministry asked quick commerce apps to drop the "10-minute delivery" tagline and loosen rules for gig workers last week. As a result, these apps have relaxed some of their policies.

Despite the government advisory, concerns about workers' safety remain. *Metrolife* visited seven dark stores (warehouses) and found that delivery agents continue to face major issues. However, a few said they did not face any penalties for exceeding the time limit.

Suresh Kumar, who works for Blinkit, noted, "We've been getting fewer tips recently," and explained that customers did not feel the need to tip for quicker deliveries anymore.

Sundar, a Swiggy Instamart worker, shared that his daily earnings have plummeted from Rs 1,300 to around Rs 700. "We do not even get compensation for 'surge' orders anymore," he said, adding that orders delivered during peak hours fetched better pay.

Even with relaxed rules, many gig workers continue to strive for speedy deliveries to meet daily targets and earn better incentives. Most Blinkit workers said they earn up to Rs 400 extra per day when targets are met.

A concern among workers is the constant changes in rules. At a Flipkart Minutes dark store, workers shared that guidelines were modified unexpectedly. One stated, "Last week, we could take up to 20 minutes to deliver, but now it's under 10 minutes — failure to comply can result in our accounts getting blocked." Many are left covering costs for fines, repairs, and medical bills resulting from accidents while rushing to meet targets.

One worker currently with Blinkit recounted how his account got blocked for failing to deliver within 10 minutes due to traffic. He was later reinstated after he explained the situation to his manager. Another delivery worker, who had an accident, completed a delivery before seeking medical help.

Delivery agents still prioritise quicker deliveries because it earns them a better rating and higher incentives. DH PHOTO/B K JANARDHAN

Fewer complaints

Delivery workers reported a decline in complaints about late deliveries. Ashwin Gowda, who works with multiple apps, said, "Customers used to call if we were not at their doorstep in eight minutes, but now they do not mind if we exceed that time by a few minutes." Others noted some customers encouraged them to take their time during peak hours.

Quick commerce apps *Metrolife* reached out to were unavailable for comment.

AN OLD ISSUE

Mohammed Inayath Ali, president of the Karnataka App-Based Workers' Union, notes that gig workers' pay is linked to their ratings. Higher ratings lead to better incentives and more orders, while lower ratings result in fewer orders, reduced pay, and potential blockage of accounts.

Ali explains that estimated delivery times set by apps are often unrealistic due to factors beyond the workers' control — such as restricted access to gated communities, parking risks, and restricted elevator usage.

GROUND REALITY

Metrolife ordered items through various apps to get an idea of how long deliveries actually take. While the expected delivery time on the apps varied from 7 to 9 minutes, the executives exceeded the stipulated time by a few minutes. Some cited traffic, while others put it down to delays in packing and difficulty in finding the location.

EVENTS

Marathi film
The Marathi film 'Marching in the Dark', examining the agrarian crisis in India, will be screened on January 28, 6.30 pm at Bangalore International Centre, Domlur. RSVP to bangaloreinternational-centre.org

English play
'Bali: The Sacrifice', an English adaptation of Girish Karnad's 'Hittina Hunja', directed by Arundhati Raja, will be staged on January 29, 7.30 pm, at Jagriti Theatre, Whitefield. Tickets online.

Discussion
'Reclaim the economy', an event to discuss overconsumption, gig work and community-led change, will be held on February 1, 11 am at Atta Galatta, Indiranagar. Entry free. For details, call 96325 10126.

VINTAGE WHEELS

The 1947 MG TC owned by John Curtis was one of over 60 vehicles displayed at the 'Retro revival – vintage and classic car exhibition' organised by The Bangalore Club and the Karnataka Vintage and Classic Car Club on Sunday.
DH PHOTO/PUSHKAR V

Trekking org invites docs to run free health clinics in mountains

TEAM METROLIFE

A Bengaluru-based trekking organisation has launched a volunteer initiative to provide basic medical care in remote Himalayan villages. Called Aarogya Seva, it mobilises medical professionals who trek with the organisation to extend their itinerary by a day or two to run free health clinics for residents.

The first clinic was held in Lohajung, Uttarakhand, on December 20, 2025, and was led by a paediatrician. Since then, five more camps have been organised in the state, involving general physicians, ophthalmologists and a dentist. Over 80 medical professionals have applied to volunteer for upcoming camps, and around 20% are from Bengaluru, says Swathi Chatrapathy, chief editor at Indiahikes, which is behind the initiative.

So far, the camps have been hosted at Indiahikes' campuses in four villages, Lohajung, Karchi, Sari and Gaichawan Gaon. Swathi says residents often have to travel seven to eight hours one way to Dehradun for specialised medical care, and villages further inside remain poorly connected by road.

The trek leaders with the organisation are medically trained and are often approached by mountain villagers for help. This unmet need prompted the team to "mobilise the trekking community to give back to mountain communities". The response to the first clinic reinforced the need. "More than 80 children turned up. A local school even declared a holiday so students could attend," Swathi recalls. In some children, developmental delays and epilepsy were identified.

The initiative will also be opened to non-trekkers shortly.

For details, write to info@indiahikes.com

The Indian Ploggers Army Trust collected nearly 14 large sacks of garbage from around Vidhana Soudha. PIC: IPAT

R-Day leaves city streets littered

SHRADDHA A K
TEAM METROLIFE

As Republic Day celebrations wound up on Monday, public spaces across Bengaluru were left strewn with waste ranging from paper cups and food wrappers to tricolour-themed printouts and plastic flags. Activists emphasise the need for stronger awareness and enforcement drives to make public celebrations eco-friendly and litter-free.

On Monday morning, volunteers from the Indian Ploggers Army Trust (IPAT) carried out a cleanup drive around Vidhana Soudha. They were joined by volunteers from organisations such as Saahas and Esaf Foundation, and workers from the Public Works Department. "In two hours, we collected nearly 14 sacks of garbage from the road off Vidhana Soudha," said IPAT founder G Nagaraj. The waste largely comprised paper cups, brochures, and biscuit and chocolate wrappers with food still inside. "Such mixed waste is difficult to segregate," says Nagaraj. The waste was later handed over to the Greater Bengaluru Authority.

Similar littering was reported elsewhere. Solid Waste Management (SWM) tenders in Hennur and R R Nagar said they collected large volumes of tricolour streamers, plastic flags, and party poppers from roads, offices, schools and apartment complexes.

Some citizen-led initiatives, however, showed that low-waste celebrations are possible. Dr Shanthi Tummala of the HSR Citizen Forum said a GBA-organised event she attended was zero-waste, with breakfast served to nearly 1,000 people on rented steel cutlery. "We saw similar efforts in apartments and temples across HSR," she said, adding, "Change is happening, but it's limited."

Free lessons on riding electric unicycle

The classes are also a platform to create awareness about new mobility solutions

BARKHA KUMARI
TEAM METROLIFE

Every Sunday, a small group gathers at a park in Basavanagudi to learn how to ride an electric unicycle — a motor-powered wheel used for short commutes and recreation, including offroading.

Two instructors guide participants on how to mount and manoeuvre the device by shifting their body weight. It is positioned between the rider's legs and is ridden standing upright on foot pedals. Some models also come with a seat. For training, the group uses 20 kg and 25 kg models with a top speed of 25 kmph. While the adoption of electric unicycles has been strong in the USA and Europe for a decade, it remains at a nascent stage in Bengaluru.

The Rad Unicycle Community has been hosting these free training sessions for the past two years. More than 1,000 Bengalureans, ranging from five-year-olds to senior citizens, have participated so far, says Kiran Makam, founder of Radboards, which builds next-generation mobility solutions. He says the initiative emerged purely from public demand.

"My team used to take electric unicycles to Cubbon Park for casual rides, and people would stop us to ask what it was, how much it cost, and if we could teach them," he says. Since the demand is more than they can meet, they select 10 participants per session via a WhatsApp poll every Wednesday.

Most people join out of curiosity or to learn a new skill, and pick up the basics in about three sessions. A growing number of working professionals are signing up to potentially use it as an alternative mode of commuting. Makam says around 100 participants have gone on to purchase the device, despite its steep cost — prices start at Rs 50,000.

Jerome Anand, a 34-year-old animator, received an electric unicycle worth Rs 1.85 lakh as a birthday gift from his wife, six months after training with the group. "I would see people zip past on their unicycles while I was stuck in traffic in my car or two-wheeler. It looked like a fun way to get around," he recalls.

Today, he rides his electric unicycle to his office and gym, which are 10-15 km away from his home in Nagarbhavi. Two weeks ago, Anand rode it from his home to Kundana Fort, then to a breakfast stop, and on to M G Road before returning home. He covered nearly 100 km. "Namma Metro allows passengers to carry the electric unicycle as luggage in the last coach, so sometimes I carry it and combine it with my commute," he adds.

These classes double up as a platform to create awareness about new mobility solutions for short commutes. "They are portable (equipped with a carrying handle). They require no parking. You can store them under your desk. They are low-maintenance and help reduce congestion," Makam elaborates. However, he is aware of the challenges.

Electric unicycles are not covered under the Motor Vehicles Act, which regulates two-wheelers and other vehicles. While Makam says these devices can handle "everyday potholes", their wider adoption would require the development of cycling lanes, the progress of which remains slow. Despite uneven roads in the city, Makam and Anand say they have not suffered falls yet.

Visit @radboardsofficial on Instagram or radboards.in.

Due to high demand, the group selects 10 participants for each session via a WhatsApp poll every Wednesday.

FARNAZ

CITY MIX

Concert to feature Uzbekistan's Doyra drum

The Indian Music Experience museum, J P Nagar, will host a multicultural concert titled 'Flutes and Frames' on January 30 at 7 pm. The band will feature flautist Amith A Nadig, khanjira player G Guru Prasanna, and Abbos Kosimov, who will play the doyra, a traditional frame drum from Uzbekistan. The concert will showcase how melody and rhythm transcend borders.

Visit indianmusicexperience.org to register.

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Rs 18-crore jewellery, cash theft at city builder's home

Domestic help suspected; CCTV power cut

MANJUNATH SHETTAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

A couple from Nepal allegedly fled with gold and diamond jewellery, silver articles and cash worth about Rs 18 crore from the house of a city-based builder in Marathahalli, police said.

According to the FIR, the family had employed several domestic workers, including Ambika, a cook, and Dinesh and Kamala, who assisted with household chores.

On Sunday, around 9 am, the family left the house to attend a family function.

Around 12.30 pm, Ambika alerted the owner that the house had been ransacked and valuables stolen. On returning, the family found lockers on the ground and first floors broken.

Police said Dinesh and Kamala allegedly fled with 11.5 kg of gold and diamond jewellery, 5 kg of silver articles and Rs 11.5 lakh in cash.

The total value of the stolen property is estimated at Rs 18 crore.

Preliminary investigation suggests the suspects had prior knowledge of the family's movements and the location of the valuables. The accused also allegedly cut off the power supply to disable CCTV cameras, police said.

A case has been registered at the Marathahalli police station, and a special team has been formed to trace the suspects and recover the stolen property.

House owner MR Shivakumar Gowda told *DH* that two domestic workers, Vikash and Maya Vishnu, who also hailed from Nepal, had taken sudden leave about a month ago and arranged replacements — Dinesh and Kamala — around 20 days ago. Though they were offered a monthly salary of Rs 27,500, they kept delaying submission of identity documents and bank details, he said.

Diversion tactics

Gowda alleged that on the day of the incident, Kamala took Ambika shopping and kept her occupied for over an hour, while Dinesh, who was assigned gardening work back at the house, allegedly committed the theft.

Police have traced their former employees on Kanakapura Road and are probing whether they were involved in planning the burglary.

Investigators suspect the accused may have used fake names, police said.

23-km BBC stretch linking airport to be prioritised

NAVEEN MENEZES
BENGALURU, DHNS

A 23-km stretch of the Bengaluru Business Corridor (BBC), formerly Peripheral Ring Road, is likely to be prioritised, with the Bangalore Development Authority planning civil work tenders by March.

LK Atheeq

The stretch is part of a 73-km road connecting Tumakuru and Ballari Road. The project is split into three packages to ease land acquisition and speed up construction.

The 23-km stretch will connect the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) and NICE Road. It is expected to see high traffic and better toll collection.

"The Detailed Project Report (DPR) is ready. We plan to float tenders for the first phase in February or March. The remaining stretches will be taken up based on land acquisition progress," LK Atheeq, Chairperson, BBC, told *DH*.

The remaining stretches are a 29-km link from Hosur Road to Old Madras Road, and an 18-km link from Old Madras Road to Ballari Road.

The project includes a Y-shaped integration with NICE Road, stretching 4-5 km each on Hosur Road and Tumakuru Road.

"We have made progress on land acquisition. About 500 farmers have given consent and nearly 100 acres have been acquired. We aim to take possession of 50% of the land before floating tenders and reach 80% by the time the contract is awarded," Atheeq said.

The BDA has seen limited success acquiring land in western Bengaluru, but faces opposition from eastern landowners, who demand compensation as per the 2013 law.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar has called a meeting with landowners dissatisfied with the government's five compensation models, which they say are far below market value.

Meeting on Feb 2

The meeting is scheduled for February 2 at 11.30 am at UR Bhavan Complex, High Grounds.

Krishna, a resident whose land was notified for the project, said eastern Bengaluru landowners oppose the project mainly due to "unfair" compensation offered by the government. "BDA is offering about Rs 5 crore per acre. My neighbours have sold similar land for over Rs 10 crore."

Excise dept busts illegal defence liquor racket; goods worth Rs 26L seized

BENGALURU, DHNS: In a crackdown on the smuggling of liquor meant for defence personnel, Excise Department officials of Bengaluru Urban District-3 (BUD-3) seized contraband and vehicles worth Rs 26 lakh in two operations this month.

The Deputy Commissioner of Excise (BUD-3) stated the operations were conducted under guidance of the Excise Commissioner and Joint Commissioner (Enforcement and Investigation), Bengaluru Division (North).

At Jnanabharathi

The first raid took place on January 1 near Vidyanikethan Public School, Ullal Road.

A team led by Excise Deputy Superintendent Mallikarjuna Reddy and Inspector Rangaiah intercepted a car transporting 40 bottles (30 litres) of defence-only liquor.

Officials seized the vehicle and the alcohol, valued at Rs 9 lakh. The accused, S Kiran, 33, a resident of Jnanajyotinagar, has been served notice to appear for investigation.

Intercepted on highway

The second haul occurred on January 24 on NH-48 (Bengaluru-Tumakuru Road) near Madavara village in Kengeri.

Acting on a tip-off, officials intercepted a vehicle leaving the city and found 49 bottles (36.75 litres) of illegal defence liquor. The seized goods and vehicle in this case are valued at Rs 17 lakh.

The accused, G Govindaraj, 27, a resident of Ballari, has also been issued notice for inquiry.

In total, the Excise Department confiscated 66.75 litres of defence liquor and two cars in January.

Cases have been registered against both individuals as the department steps up its vigil against illegal diversion of Canteen Stores Department (CSD) stocks into the open market.

Longest underpass near Yelahanka airbase

NHAI floats tenders for Rs 51-cr project in Bengaluru

MUTHI-UR-RAHMAN SIDDIQUI
BENGALURU, DHNS

Bengaluru's longest tunnel-like underpass is set to come up near the Yelahanka Air Force Station on the airport highway.

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has invited Requests for Proposal (RFP) to build a depressed service road — an underpass constructed about six metres below the main road level — at a cost of Rs 51.27 crore, excluding GST.

Besides the 320-metre covered depressed service road, the project includes an 800-metre surface-level road, relocation of Indian Air Force (IAF) assets and other allied works.

The underpass will have two lanes with paved shoulders. It will connect the IAF station's domestic area to its technical area, and also link the runway to Hunasamaranahalli Lake, said KB Jayakumar, Project Director at NHAI, Bengaluru.

"This is the only stretch on the airport highway that does not have a service road. It is a black spot on the 22.12-km Hebbal-Trumpet section of National Highway 7 (now known as NH 44).

"The NHAI has given all necessary clearances for the project," Jayakumar told *DH*.

According to the official, the underpass will be far longer than any existing one in the city. "It will be a tunnel-like road built using the cut-and-cover method," he noted.

Under this method, a trench is excavated from the surface, the tunnel is built within it, and the road is restored with backfilling.

In contrast, the 16.75-km Silk Board Junction-Hebbal tunnel road will be constructed using Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs), which are also used for underground metro lines.

An artist's impression of the tunnel-like underpass coming up on the airport highway.

The NHAI will shift IAF assets, including the entrance gate and the compound wall, and has already completed the work for around 200 metres, the official added.

Bids will be opened on February 25, with the contract expected to be awarded by March-end, Jayakumar said.

While the project deadline will be 18 months from the date of award, the NHAI aims to complete a big chunk of the work ahead of Aero India 2027, scheduled for February next year. No traffic diversions will be required during construction, he added.

The NHAI has recently built service roads at two locations on the airport highway: a one-kilometre stretch opposite Esteem Mall in Hebbal and a 1.1-km-long stretch at Jakkur. Both roads are about 10 metres wide.

It is also constructing a 700-metre-long, six-lane underpass at Sadahalli to remove the only signal on the airport highway.

The Rs 35-crore project has been awarded to Vidya Infratech Pvt Ltd and work will start soon. The completion timeline will be 15 months, Jayakumar said.

Bike-borne men rob jewellery shop; cops launch manhunt

BENGALURU, DHNS: In a brazen daylight robbery, three bike-borne men barged into a jewellery shop in Dasanapura, within the limits of the Madanayakanahalli police station, and decamped with over 30 grams of gold ornaments and Rs 50,000 in cash after threatening staff at gunpoint.

According to a senior police officer, the incident occurred at Ramdev Jewels around 5.30 pm when the accused entered the shop on the pretext of enquiring about earrings.

When informed that the design was unavailable, the men allegedly pulled out a pistol and threatened the shop owner's children and employees.

The gang is said to have scratched the face of one staffer and gagged him to prevent him from raising an alarm before fleeing towards Nelamangala on a motorcycle.

Based on a complaint filed by shop owner Manik Ram, the Madanayakanahalli police registered a case of robbery and formed two special teams to trace the accused.

Investigation revealed the accused were conversing in Hindi and Rajasthani while issuing threats, leading police to suspect they may be from Rajasthan or Uttar Pradesh.

Brave minors intervene

Two minor boys who were present in the shop reportedly punched the accused and attempted to raise an alarm when they were threatened at gunpoint.

The shop owner was not present at the time of the incident.

Man injured as lorry topples

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 35-year-old man sustained grievous leg injuries after a stationary, loaded lorry toppled over him near ESI Hospital in Rajajinagar on Tuesday night.

According to the Rajajinagar traffic police, the incident occurred around 9.30 pm while the lorry was parked at the kerbside for minor repair work. Police are yet to ascertain what caused the vehicle to topple.

The victim, who was standing near the lorry, was pinned under the chassis after the load shifted.

The Rajajinagar traffic police, along with emergency responders, rushed to the spot and summoned two heavy-duty cranes. The lorry was lifted and the victim was pulled out.

Police said the man's leg was crushed under the weight of the loaded truck. He was initially taken to the nearby ESI Hospital to stabilise and later shifted by ambulance to Victoria Hospital for advanced treatment.

Suo motu case filed after woman flags harassment by naked man

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Hebbagodi police registered a suo motu case after a health professional alleged harassment by a naked man who arrived in a car in Bengaluru.

The incident came to light after the woman shared a video on Instagram, which went viral on social media.

The woman stated that the incident occurred in broad daylight when the naked man repeatedly pressured her to enter his vehicle. She managed to escape and later posted about the incident on Instagram.

A senior police officer said a patrolling constable, Vrushabendra, attached to the Hebbagodi police station, was alerted by locals about the incident. He viewed the video and informed senior officers.

"We have identified the woman, who hails from Tripura and works at a private hospital. She has been asked to give a detailed statement for further action. However, she is not willing to cooperate with the investigation and has deleted the video soon after the police approached her on Monday."

"We found no CCTV cameras around the locality and it is difficult to identify the particular vehicle's movement," the officer said.

As the incident occurred within the Hebbagodi police station limits, a suo motu case was registered and efforts are on to trace the suspect, the officer added.

On January 24, she was returning home from work when the incident took place and, despite several passers-by, no one came forward to help.

One person was allegedly seen laughing. She criticised those who dismissed the incident as "reel or real", stating that such reactions trivialise serious safety concerns faced by women.

Drunken brawl murder: 'Panicked, but didn't intend to kill', says techie

MANJUNATH SHETTAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

A day after a drunken brawl ended in a car-ramming murder, Roshan Hegde, 37, told investigators the act was not intentional and that he panicked when Prashanth clung to his car window.

A senior Hebbagodi police officer said Hegde, who was being treated for injuries at a private hospital, was discharged and taken into custody for interrogation.

Hegde said his Tata Safari broke down near the cricket ground, and he called a mechanic to replace the battery. As he was about to leave, Prashanth alias Venu allegedly abused him over losing matches during the cricket tournament.

Hegde claimed Prashanth, under the influence of alcohol, tried to assault him, prompting him to flee.

Roshan Hedge was taken into custody by Hebbagodi police.

Prashanth reportedly climbed onto the car's footboard, held the left-side window, and tried to hit Hegde and pull the gear lever. Hegde said he drove at around 50 kmph, panicked by Prashanth's behaviour, and lost control.

He said the narrow road, oncoming vehicles, and high-beam headlights impaired his visibility, causing the car to hit a tree and ram into a compound wall. He maintained he had no intention of killing Prashanth.

Hegde said he injured his face and cut his tongue when his head hit the steering wheel, but survived as the airbags were deployed.

Hegde, a native of Brahmavar in Udupi district, lives with his wife in Vignan Nagar and works at a private firm in Domlur.

After questioning, he was produced in court and remanded to judicial custody. Further investigation is on, police said.

On Sunday evening, Prashanth M (33), a bodybuilder from Veerasandra, was killed after an argument with Hegde escalated into a chase.

The two men were drinking beer on open ground behind M5 Ecity Mall in Electronics City after a cricket tournament when a quarrel broke out, allegedly over a cigarette lighter.

Police initially received a call to the 112-emergency helpline reporting a road accident. However, preliminary investigations revealed the crash was intentional and amounted to murder.

The incident was captured on the vehicle's dash camera.

Cash firm staff siphon off Rs 1.38 cr meant for ATM deposits

BENGALURU, DHNS: Koramangala police have launched an investigation after employees of a cash management services firm allegedly misappropriated Rs 1.38 crore instead of depositing it in ATMs.

Two separate FIRs were registered on January 19 following complaints by representatives of Hitachi Payment Service Private Ltd.

The first FIR states that the suspects — Praveen, Dhanasheka A, Ramakka and Harish Kumar — took Rs 57.96 lakh from Axis Bank in Koramangala and were supposed to deposit it in ATMs.

"The suspects, with the intention to cheat the complainant, did not deposit the cash," Mithun, 38, the complainant, was quoted as saying in the FIR.

Similarly, the second FIR named Harish Kumar, Praveen Kumar and Varun as suspects and states that they misappropriated Rs 80.49 lakh. The suspects took small amounts from the cash they were supposed to deposit between 2024 and 2025, kept it for personal use, and cheated their employer. By the time the company discovered this, they had misappropriated Rs 1.38 crore.

"This is a case of cheating. The suspects are yet to be traced, and an investigation is underway to arrest them and recover the cash," a senior police officer told *DH*.

Pvt company flags massive data theft; FIR filed

BENGALURU, DHNS: A private company has alleged data theft by one of its employees, claiming the stolen source code and software were worth 8,000,000 Euros (Rs 87.44 crore), police officials said on Tuesday.

Whitefield Cybercrime Police registered an FIR on January 23 after receiving a complaint from Zul Kafeel, 49, of Amadeus Software Labs India (P) Ltd, Marathahalli.

The FIR states that the suspect, Ashutosh Nigam, was employed as senior manager-research scientist since February 1, 2020. His employment followed an Asset Purchase Agreement (Software Purchase) with Innovative Scheduling LLC (Optym).

Kafeel stated that during his employment, Nigam unauthorisedly accessed and exfiltrated source code and software belonging to the company on October 11, 2025 by transferring it and other confidential data from his personal email account without consent or approvals from the company.

When confronted with internal findings and records, Nigam allegedly admitted to exfiltrating the source code, which was video recorded by the company.

His employment was terminated on December 3.

The FIR stated the software, including the source code, is valued at 8,000,000 Euros. The exfiltration caused severe business impact and loss to the company and compromised its intellectual property rights.

"These acts by Ashutosh Nigam amount to data theft, unauthorised access, misuse and fraudulent exploitation of the company's computer systems, records, intellectual property and confidential data. We request action against Ashutosh Nigam as per law," the complainant stated.

TOURISM HIT

Tour plans disrupted as West Asia tensions & unrest lead to flight cancellations

ASRA MAVAD
BENGALURU, DHNS

Tensions between the United States and Iran rise, airlines are cancelling or rerouting flights to Europe and Central Asia.

On January 27, IndiGo cancelled all flights to and from Tbilisi (Georgia), Almaty (Kazakhstan), Tashkent (Uzbekistan), and Baku (Azerbaijan) until February 11, as these routes pass over Iranian airspace.

"Taking into account developments around Iran... We are taking a cautious and proactive approach, with customer and crew as our highest priority," read a statement from the airline.

Flights from India to these cities take six to seven hours. IndiGo operates A320neo aircraft on these routes, which lack the range for longer alternatives.

Recently, the airline cancelled the Delhi-Tbilisi and Mumbai-Almaty services.

Earlier this month, the European Union Aviation Safety Agency issued an advisory on flying over Iranian airspace due to increased risks to civil aviation.

Trending destinations

Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan remain top destinations for Bengaluru travellers.

The situation has left travellers stranded.

"I was set to fly to Tbilisi this week, but my flight is cancelled. I will get a refund, but prices have more than doubled. I am unsure about rebooking," said Mohammed Muhith, who had booked a five-day vacation for his family of three.

Another couple planning to visit Uzbekistan in early February remains wary. As many Central Asian destinations lack direct flights to Bengaluru, tourists rely on connecting flights.

"Most people from Bengaluru use connecting flights through Thailand, as they are cheaper. Round-trip flights cost Rs 25,000 to Rs 30,000," said Rajiv Mehrotra, executive director of Holiday Concierge.

In the past six months, 60-70% of Mehrotra's international bookings from Bengaluru were to Central Asia.

"For those who have already travelled in Southeast Asia, this is something new. It is cheaper than Europe. With the Vietnam trend fading, people are now looking at these places." he added.

The increase in Indian tourism has led to the popularity of Indian cuisine in these destinations, said Rohit Hangal, director of Sphere Travelmedia and Exhibitions. He added that Central Asia is likely to attract more tourists this year.

TV actor's family feud leads to FIRs

BENGALURU, DHNS: A family dispute involving television actor Kavya Gowda has escalated into a police case, with a complaint and counter-complaint lodged at the Ramamurthy Nagar police station.

Based on the complaints, police have registered FIRs against eight people in connection with allegations of assault and verbal abuse following a domestic altercation between two brothers and their wives.

Kavya and her husband Somashekhar, along with Premalatha and her husband Nandeesh, approached the police separately.

Somashekhar and Nandeesh are brothers who live with their parents in NRI Layout, Kalkere.

According to a complaint filed by Kavya's sister, Bhavya Gowda, Kavya was assaulted during the altercation and her husband Somashekhar was allegedly stabbed with a knife.

In a counter-complaint, Premalatha alleged that she was also assaulted and that her mangalsutra was forcibly snatched during the incident.

Police said both sides have accused each other of physical assault, inappropriate behaviour, verbal abuse, and issuing threats of rape and murder. FIRs have been registered accordingly, they added.

Kavya has acted in several popular television serials, including *Seetavallabha*, *Gandhari* and *Radha Ramana*.

Udupi boat capsize toll goes up to three

UDUPI, DHNS: The toll in tourist boat mishap at Malpe coast rose up to three after a woman succumbed on Tuesday. The deceased is Disha (23) from Jalapuri, Mysuru. The tragedy had claimed two lives on Jan 26 after a tourist boat capsized near the Hangarkatte shipbuilding area. It was carrying 14 passengers.

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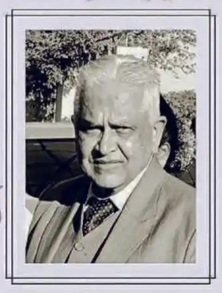

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Daughter Suvarna & Family
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All 6,000 GPs in state to be named after Gandhi: CM

Cong leaders submit memo to guv against scrapping MGNREGA

BENGALURU, DHNS

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday announced that all 6,000 gram panchayats (GPs) in the state would be named after Mahatma Gandhi.

Addressing the 'MNREGA Bachao Sangram' rally at Freedom Park here on Tuesday, Siddaramaiah slammed the Modi government for scrapping MGNREGA scheme as well as dropping Gandhi's name in new scheme (Viksit Bharat- Guarantee for Rozgar Ajeevika Mission Grameen Act).

"The BJP government cannot tolerate Mahatma Gandhi's name. They intentionally named the new scheme with the word 'Ram' to play on people's mind. But it is neither 'Dasharatha Ram', 'Kaushalya Ram' nor 'Sita Ram'. There is no Ram in this Act. The BJP has scrapped programmes meant for the poor guided by RSS, which wants the poor to remain poor. Only Congress thinks of the poor," he said.

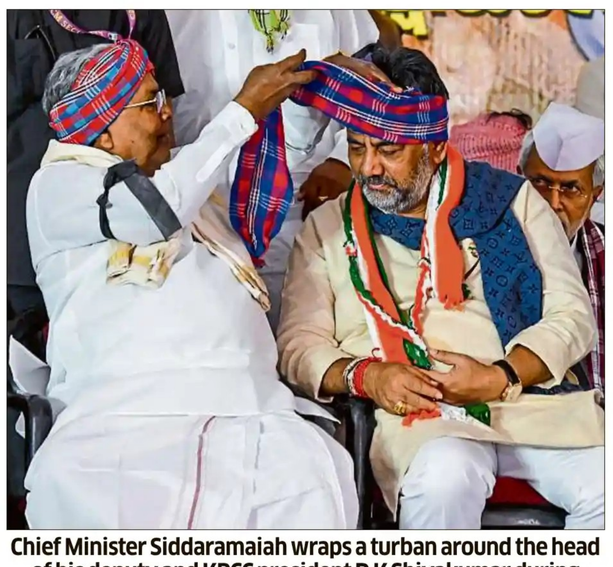
Earlier, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said even as BJP and JD(S) alleged corruption in MGNREGA, his constituency Kanakapura had spent Rs 200 crore every year under the scheme and the Centre recognised it as most developed taluk.

"We urge the Centre through the governor to roll back the new law and restore MGNREGA. They are killing GPs, snatching powers of 7 lakh GPs and work from the poor. We will not stop till Centre repeals VB-G RAM G Act, like they withdrew farm laws after farmers' protest".

'Owes Rs 70,000 crore'

AICC general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala said, "The Centre has hit livelihoods of 11 crore rural workers. State governments will need to bear 40% of the cost. But states have no money as Centre takes away Rs 5 lakh crore under GST and cesses through Finance Commission. It owes Rs 70,000 crore to Karnataka alone. The employment guarantee will end on its own due to funds crunch".

"The Centre, which waived corporates' loans worth Rs 23 lakh crore, is unwilling to give Rs 1 lakh crore to MGNREGA to benefit 55 crore rural poor," Surjewala said.



Chief Minister Siddaramaiah wraps a turban around the head of his deputy and KPCC president D K Shivakumar during the 'Lok Bhavan chalo' protest against the scrapping of the MGNREGA, at Freedom Park in Benglauru on Tuesday.
DH PHOTO/PUSHKAR V

Siddu admonishes crowd for chanting 'DK'

The rally saw crowds cheering for Shivakumar as soon as the CM got up to speak.

Siddaramaiah admonished the crowds saying, "Yaarree adu DK annodu... Sumniri... (who is that calling out DK, keep quiet)!".

Rajya Sabha member G C Chandrashekhar tried to pacify the crowd, saying, "Youth Congress workers please remain quiet. CM is going to speak. Listen to his speech".

Siddaramaiah too screamed at the crowds, which refused to stop chanting "DK... DK".

A delegation of Congress leaders led by the CM, DCM and Surjewala rode a BMTC bus to Lok Bhavan and submitted a memorandum to Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, opposing the scrapping of MGNREGA.

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Yogesh Goudar murder: HC bins Vinay Kulkarni's bail plea

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Karnataka high court has dismissed the petition filed by former minister and Congress MLA Vinay Kulkarni in the Yogish Goudar murder case.

Justice Sunil Dutt Yadav said that when the Apex Court had cancelled the bail on the ground of violation of conditions without reserving liberty, it would be against judicial propriety for any other court to reconsider and grant bail. The case pertains to the killing of BJP Zilla Panchayat member Yogesh Goudar in Dharwad on June 15, 2016. After the case was transferred to the CBI, the central agency filed a second additional charge sheet, including Vinay Kulkarni as an accused for the offences under IPC sections 120B, 143, 147, 148, 302 and under section 25 read with sections 3, 5, 8 and 29 of the Arms Act.

On August 11, 2021, the Apex Court had granted bail to him which was subsequently cancelled by the Apex Court itself on June 6, 2025. The petitioner Kulkarni again approached the trial court seeking regular bail on changed circumstances. It was submitted that all material witnesses had been examined in the case and it was only the evidence of official witnesses that remained. The counsel for the petitioner argued on the ground of parity submitting that other co-accused whose bail was also cancelled on the ground of violation of bail conditions had the benefit of bail order restored by the high court.

On the other hand, P Prasanna Kumar, appearing for the CBI, submitted that there were certain other witnesses, who were yet to be examined in the trial. He also said that the cancellation of bail by the Apex Court had disentitled the petitioner to seek fresh bail as the Apex Court had not reserved liberty to seek for fresh bail.

Justice Sunil Dutt Yadav observed that while cancelling the bail granted to Vinay Kulkarni, the Apex Court had stated that there was sufficient material on record that attempts had been made by him to either contact witnesses or alternatively, influence such witnesses. The high court further noted that the order cancelling bail did not reserve liberty to approach again and a further direction by the Apex Court to complete trial expeditiously would in fact indicate that the top court intended to mitigate the long incarceration by directing speedy conclusion of the trial.

"The ground of 'change in circumstances' may be a ground for reconsideration of an order rejecting bail, but would be of no avail where the bail is cancelled for violation of conditions imposed. When the bail granted is cancelled for violation of bail conditions, the accused essentially disentitles himself of exercise of judicial discretion subsequently. The subsequent events of nearing completion of examination of witnesses are of no relevance," Justice Sunil Dutt Yadav said.

The court further clarified that it had not recorded any finding regarding the merits of the claim and had merely disposed of the petition holding that petitioner is required to approach the Apex Court itself.

Fence all vacant govt properties, revenue minister tells officials

BENGALURU, DHNS: Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda on Tuesday directed deputy commissioners, assistant commissioners and tahsildars to complete the fencing of every vacant government land parcel in Bengaluru.

He also warned that revenue officers will be held personally accountable if encroachments recur. At a review meeting, Byre Gowda was informed that nearly 97% of government land within the city limits has already been identified and digitised through the Land Beat app. He directed the officials carry out ground verification using this data and update details on the Dishank platform to facilitate swift eviction drives.

Expressing displeasure over the lack of action against unauthorised layouts on grazing land, officials were asked to submit details of illegal layouts demolished and criminal cases registered so far.

Raising concern over the daily mushrooming of illegal constructions in Bengaluru, the minister pulled up field officials for inaction and made it clear that no leniency should be shown to violators of land-use laws. Directions were also issued to initiate strict action against individuals involved in forging land records and documents.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE

My client **Sri D.A. Srinivas** S/o Late D.K. Adikesavalu Aged about 52 years, R/o No. 7/21, 1st Cross, 9th Main, R.M.V. Extension, Bengaluru - 560 080, has instructed me to issue public notice with regard to properties which are subject to pending adjudications before the civil court and at presently pending considering before the Hon'ble supreme court of India. The subject of the properties are as follows:-

Sy No: 274/1, 268, 264, 267, 272/3, 273, 276, 274/2, 274/1, 275, 272/3, 272/1, 272/2, 271/1, 272/4, 15 items of agriculture Properties totally measuring 26 acres 10 guntas, situated at Avathi Village, Kasaba Hobli, Devanahalli Taluk, Bangalore Rural District.

Sy No:113/3 3A & 3B, 117, 117, 120, 118/6B, 121, 112/2, 111/1, 118/1B and 121 totally 10 items agriculture Properties measuring 6 acres 11 guntas situated at Bullahalli Village, Vijayapura Hobli, Devanahalli Taluk, Bangalore Rural District:

Sy No: 47/2, 28/5, 29/5, 41/2, 28/6, 29/6 and 28/4, totally 7 item agriculture Properties measuring 6 acres 11 guntas situated at Dasarahalli Village, Kasaba Hobli, Devanahalli Taluk, Bangalore Rural District:

Sy No: 96/6, 92/5A, 89/1, 89/1, 89/1, 89/1, 87/3, 92/1 and 92/5B totally 9 itemconverted Properties measuring 6 acres 16 guntas situated at Nallurahalli Village, Krishnarajapura Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, and Bengaluru:

Sy No: 89/1, 89/1 totally 2 items agriculture Properties measuring 29 guntas situated at Nallurahalli Village, Krishnarajapura Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, Bengaluru.My client Sri. D.A. Srinivas is the owner and in possession of all the above immovable properties. A declaratory suit has been filed by client in O.S. 246/2020 against One Smt. Manjula, K.R. Pradeep and K.R. Rohith before the Court of the senior Civil Judge, Bengaluru Rural District, Bengaluru and there was an order of status quo and lateran on an application filed by Smt. Manjula under order 7 rule 11, the said suit came to be rejected. The said judgment and decree was challenged before the Hon'ble High court of Karnataka in R.F.A. No: 2216/2023 which came to be allowed. Now said Smt Manjula is before the Hon'ble supreme court in SLP (civil) 7924/2024 challenging the judgment passed in R.F.A. 2216/2023. Hon'ble supreme court has granted interim order on 08-04-2024 and matter is required to adjudicate finally by the courts.

It is hereby informed to the general public at large that certain immovable properties, details of which are the subject matter of civil litigation, are presently pending adjudication before the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. Smt. Manjula, K.R. Pradeep and K.R. Rohith are trying to alienate some properties. Therefore it is hereby bringing it to the kind notice to the public that any transaction, purchase, or dealing in respect of such properties during the pendency of legal proceedings is not permissible and may render the purchaser's rights subject to the final orders of the Hon'ble Court.

Therefore, all persons are cautioned not to enter into any agreement, sale,purchase, or transaction relating to the above properties until the matter is finally adjudicated and disposed of by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. Any person dealing with the said properties, despite this notice, shall be doing so at their own risk, cost, and consequences, and neither my client nor their representatives shall be responsible for any claims, losses, or disputes arising therefrom.

Issued in the interest of the public.
J&M Associate Adv. Jayasheelareddy TS
Ph 9743801260
Office at : 57/7, 1st Floor, Subbarama Chetty Road Nettakallappa Circle, Basavanagudi, Bengaluru- 560004

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that my client intends to purchase the immovable properties mentioned and described in the schedule below from its Owner Sri. **Rajaiah B.**, son of Late Basappa, (hereafter referred to as "Owner"). The Owner represents that he is the absolute owner of the Schedule Property which is free from any encumbrance, mortgage, charge, lien or litigation and he has not entered into any sort of agreement/MOU/Deeds etc., for sale/transfer of the Schedule Property. Any person/s having any objection, claim, right, title and/or interest with respect to the Schedule Property or any part or portion thereof by way of sale, conveyance, acquisition, partition, transfer, memorandum of understanding, exchange, mortgage, pledge, charge, encumbrance, inheritance, succession, lease, easement or demand or objections or claims of any nature whatsoever for the proposed transaction shall lodge their claim(s)/objection(s)/demand(s) with the undersigned supported by documentary evidence within **Fifteen (15) days** from the date of publication of this notice failing which, my client shall proceed with the above-mentioned transaction as though there are no claim(s)/objection(s)/demand(s) to the proposed transaction.

SCHEDULE

All that piece and parcel of the below mentioned properties situated at Kethohalli Village, Kasaba Hobli, Ramanagara Taluk:

Sl. No.	Sy. No.	Extent in Acres & Guntas	Boundaries			
1.	123/4	02-10	Survey No. 124/10	Survey Nos. 123/1 & 5	Private Property	Survey No. 123/2
2.	124/10	00-06	Road	Survey No. 123/4	Survey Nos. 125 & 123/4	Property belongs to Smt.Prema

Vinay K. S., Advocate,
Vinay Kademane & Associates
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email: vinay@vinaykademane.in
Place : Bengaluru
Date : 27-01-2026

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NOTICE

Disposal of Out - patient and In-patient Medical Records

Out-patient and In-patient Medical Records prior to the year 2020 will be destroyed (IP 2000001 TO IP2003545). Whosoever interested, can contact the **Medical Records Department** at **HOSMAT Hospital** to collect their out & in patient records prior to 2020 within 15 days from the date of this Notification.

Note: Not applicable to Medico-Legal files and Death Records.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Ram Kamal Bairagya, S/o Mr.Saba Kumar Bairagya, Flat No.T-1, 3th floor, 9th cross, Building No. 136, Sree Sai Archard, HAL 2nd Stage, Kodihalli, VTC, Bangalore North, intended to purchase the schedule property from it's owner Mr. Ankam Ravindra Rao, S/o Late A.L.Nacharaiah, No.5, Muniyellappa Garden, Near Diamond District, Kodihalli, Bangalore-560008.

Any person/s having any right, title or interest or claim against the said property should send their claims in writing to the above named along with the documentary evidence in support of the said claim within 7 days of publication of this notice, failing which claims if any shall be deemed to have waived and it is not binding on the part of me.

SCHEDULE

All that piece and parcel of immovable property bearing Municipal No.40, PID No. 73-50-40 with building thereon ground, first, second, third, fourth and fifth floor occupied by the tenant situated at Muniyellappa Garden, Kodihalli, Varthur Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, now under the administrative jurisdiction of BBMP old Ward No.73, New 113, site measuring East to West 46 ft and North to South 30 ft in all measuring 1379 sq.ft, bounded on: East by : Property No.39, West by:Road, North by:Property No.3, New No.8, South by:Road.

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K.N. Somaiah, Advocate, Cauvery Complex, 129, Old Madras Road, Halasuru, Bengaluru- 08

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PERSONAL

Change of Name

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **SABIHA FARHATH & SABEEHA FARHANA** W/o AHMED BASHA, R/at No.25/1-2, Bore Bank Road, Benson Town, Bangalore-560046. Declare that the above names pertain to me only Henceforth I shall be known as **SABIHA FARHATH** vide affidavit dated 20-01-2026 sworn before notary Ramachandrappa C, Bengaluru

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **M. VANI LATHA** W/o Madhu Babu Setty Balija, aged about 40 years resident of at H.No. K.No.82, Sy.No.12/7-193, Beside K. Narayanapura Bus Stop, Kothanur Village, Bengaluru – 560077, have changed my name to **SETTY BALIJA GEETHAVANI** after marriage, vide affidavit dated 22.01.2026, before Notary E. Sreenivasulu, Kurnool. Henceforth, I shall be known as **SETTY BALIJA GEETHAVANI** for all purposes.

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I M M Bhuvaneshwari W/O, Mohan Kumar Madappa R/o Mohan Kumar Madappa Garden Vilas, 7th C Cross, Quarter No 01 Bbmp Maternity Hospital, Nagarabhavi, Bangalore 560072 have changed my name to N S Bhuvaneshwari

I, HEMARAJ, Residing at No.#1-116A, Jattar Bettu Nivas Adiudupi Udupi Kaderkar -576103 Have changed my Name to HEMARAJ NARAYANA POOJARY, vide affidavit Dated 26/01/2026, Before Notary K.V Mani, Bengaluru-560030.

I, JYOTHI, Residing at No.#1-10, Beedu Marga Ambalapady Post Ambalapady, Udupi-576103, Have changed my Name to JYOTHI HEMARAJ POOJARY vide affidavit Dated 26/01/2026, Before Notary K.V Mani, Bengaluru-560030.

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Illegal sand mining: Biggies from all parties involved, says HM

MLA Karemma pours out woes; Govt assures of protection

BENGALURU, DHNS

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Tuesday told the Legislative Assembly that "big people from all parties" are involved in illegal sand mining.

This candid admission came a few days after a woman lawmaker was 'threatened' by mafiosos in Raichur district.

"This is an embarrassing situation," Parameshwara said in response to a question from Devadurga JD(S) MLA Karemma Nayak.

"Which leader is involved? Who's leading it? I won't get into that. It's a big business. Big people are involved. Big people from all parties are involved," the minister said on illegal sand mining.

Parameshwara

Last week, Karemma lodged a complaint against the 'sand mafia' for threatening her.

"I say this with pain...I've been honestly fighting against illegal sand mining, but it hasn't been possible," Karemma said.

"They (mafia) came to my house and threatened me. I'm a woman MLA. What action is the government taking? Those who came to threaten me did a press conference where two cops were deployed," she said.

Karemma said illegal sand mining is rampant in Raichur. She said sand from the Krishna river is being mined. "I get calls from people that farmers' crops are being affected because of dust. Women feel unsafe stepping out. No action was taken even after I spoke to the authorities," she said.

The MLA said the government floated tenders for the extraction and supply of sand, but the bids have not been opened. "Illegal mining means money," she said.

Parameshwara assured Karemma that no harm would come to her. "We're here to protect you," he said.

The minister said sand mining was not confined to Devadurga. "It's been happening across the state for many years," he said.

The Mines and Geology Department, Parameshwara said, follows the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act. "They have a committee comprising officials and the police. When a complaint is filed, the police take action," he said.

"There's a separate Sand Task Force. Sometimes, there are lapses. We'll see to it that they work properly," Parameshwara said. "There's no question of us compromising on this, but we can't stop this in one day."

Speaker U T Khader said no one should have the courage to threaten an MLA. "This wouldn't have happened if the local inspector had done his job." Senior BJP lawmaker S Suresh Kumar urged Parameshwara to launch an operation to clean up the Raichur district.

Constitutional safeguard for freedom of expression

Retired High Court Judge H N Nagamohan Das, High Court senior advocate Manjula Devi, Prof Nataraj Huliyar from Bangalore University's Kannada Study Centre, Bangalore Development Authority commissioner P Manivannan take part in a discussion organised by Prajavani and Deccan Herald in association with Social Welfare Department, as part of 'Constitution is Light' campaign.

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Constitution has granted all citizens the freedom to express their opinion. Article 19(1)(a) refers to freedom of speech, which allows every citizen of India to express, speak and write about their opinions.

Several courts and constitutional experts have articulated that freedom of speech includes listening to the opinion of others, differing with someone else's opinion, obtaining information and having the right to question. Freedom of speech is immortalised in 18th-century French philosopher Voltaire's words: "I disapprove of what you say but will defend to the death your right to say it."

Dance, drama, singing, street play, cinema, serial, photography, painting, literature, criticism... all this come under freedom of expression.

However, freedom of speech granted by the Constitution is not absolute. It has restrictions, where any speech hinders the security, sovereignty and unity of the nation, relationship with friendly nations, law and order and defames another person is not permissible. Article 19(2) states that the government should frame adequate laws to protect this.

In India, restrictions on freedom of speech began during the British era itself. To suppress freedom fighters, the British introduced laws on sedition (Section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code). Having undergone such suppression, our Constitution makers have ensured that we have the freedom of speech. The state is retaining these laws while regulating freedom of speech.

In the United States, freedom of the press and freedom of the speech are different. However, India doesn't have a separate concept of freedom of the press. The Supreme Court has interpreted that freedom of speech includes freedom of the press. As a result, the media also comes under the ambit of freedom of speech.

Deccan Herald, *Prajavani* and the Social Welfare Department jointly organised a discussion on 'Speech, freedom, state and Constitution' in Bengaluru.

In a debate on "Constitution is light: A discussion," experts from different fields participated. Retired High Court Judge H N Nagamohan Das, Prof Nataraj Huliyar from Bangalore University's Kannada Study Centre, the then Social Welfare Department principal secretary Captain P Manivannan and Senior High Court advocate Manjula Devi were among those who participated in the debate, which was compered by Prajavani's chief reporter Y G Jagadish.

Scan and watch complete round table discussion

CONSTITUTION IS LIGHT
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FACETS OF FREEDOM

- Listening to what others say is also an integral part of freedom of speech. However, of late, listening has taken a back seat and only expressing opinions has come into prominence.
- Freedom of speech is being trampled upon using the sedition law. Now, the name of the law has changed. The freedom of speech of those criticising the government is being undermined.
- Laws undermining freedom of speech must be abolished. Speech should not be penalised.
- New generation comedians are opposing acts against freedom of speech. This is a positive development.
- In schools and colleges, students should be educated about the Constitution, preamble, freedom of speech and fundamental rights.

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SESSION SNIPPETS

Suresh Kumar moves privilege panel

▸ **BENGALURU, DHNS:** Assembly Speaker U T Khader on Tuesday referred to the privileges committee senior BJP lawmaker S Suresh Kumar's petition seeking action against Congress workers who allegedly pasted posters outside his house and lodged a police complaint for his comments inside the House.

Last Friday, Kumar's remarks in the Assembly were expunged after protests by Urban Development Minister B S Suresha (Byrathi).

On Saturday, some Congress workers pasted posters at Kumar's house and went to the police.

"Can something spoken inside the Assembly be used for such things outside?" Kumar said, raising the issue on Tuesday.

Home Minister G Parameshwara condemned the incident outside Kumar's house.

In his petition to Khader, Kumar stated that Saturday's incident breached his privilege as a lawmaker. Kumar agreed with Khader's suggestion to have the matter referred to the privileges committee.

Hippargi barrage: Govt to replace all crest gates

▸ **BENGALURU, DHNS:** The state government has decided to replace all crest gates of the Hippargi barrage with new ones, Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda said in the Assembly on Tuesday.

Following damage to the 22nd crest gate, authorities have installed a temporary one. "Tender has been called for a new gate. The government has decided to replace all 22 gates at an estimated cost of Rs 40 crore. Technical evaluations are underway," Gowda, replying on behalf of Deputy CM D K Shivakumar, said.

"Due to the damaged crest gate, water has flown out. At present, water level is 3.9 tmcft, up from 3 tmcft," Gowda said. "By May, we estimate things will be fine. For now, there shouldn't be a problem in meeting the water needs."

The minister said that the government "will do all it takes" to get 2 tmc of water from Maharashtra.

MLAs flag harassment at toll plazas, seek FASTag passes

BENGALURU, DHNS

Congress MLA Subba Reddy raised concern over harassment and frequent altercations at toll plazas across the state, during a Calling Attention Motion in the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday.

He said toll plazas had become "problematic" for the common man, as well as elected representatives.

Citing the Bagepalli toll plaza, he alleged that "rowdy elements" were manning it and that commuters were being harassed. Recalling a recent incident while returning from Belagavi, Reddy said toll plaza personnel had stranded him for nearly five minutes demanding his identity card. "We are not seeking a free pass without respect. We are ready to pay the toll charges, but such avoidable confrontations must stop," he said, urging the government to issue clear directions.

Moodbidri MLA Umanath Kotian echoed the concern, stating that toll staff at Kadaballi toll plaza had questioned him about his identity and asked whether he was an MLA.

In his response, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said the legislators' concerns were valid and recalled that the government had earlier imposed penalties on erring toll operators, including a Rs 10 lakh penalty at Hungund.

He urged the Speaker to facilitate the provision of FASTag-based passes to legislators along with car passes. However, BJP MLA C C Patil pointed out that while FASTags had been issued, many were not activated.

Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka complained that barricades were being erected even at lanes meant for ambulances, police and VIPs, causing unnecessary delays.

Speaker U T Khader said FASTag operations were centralised and toll plazas had been auctioned by NHAI, adding that discussions with NHAI and PWD officials were needed to authenticate and activate passes to avoid future incidents.

Guv constitutionally bound to read joint address: Ponnanna

Says repeated instances of Governors walking out "alarming"

BENGALURU, DHNS

Virajpet MLA and legal adviser to the chief minister A S Ponnanna, on Tuesday, asserted on the floor of the Assembly that the governor is constitutionally bound to read the Cabinet-approved joint address in full and has no discretion to alter or refuse it.

Participating in the motion of thanks to the governor's address, Ponnanna said repeated instances of governors walking out without reading the full speech or skipping portions of it in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal and Karnataka were "alarming" and undermined constitutional propriety.

He said such conduct gave an impression that governors in non-BJP ruled states were acting at the Centre's behest. He highlighted that the joint address contains the state government's policies, social security schemes and future programmes and the governor's refusal to read it amounted to shirking a constitutional duty.

BJP's Suresh Kumar asked if Ponnanna was allowed to speak against the governor or his conduct, as the agenda mentioned none of it. Speaker U T Khader reminded the members twice to abstain from commenting on the person holding a constitutional post in the House.

Citing Article 176, Ponnanna said the special address in the first session of the year is mandatory, and laying a copy of the speech cannot "ordinarily" be a substitute for delivering it. He said courts have held that unless the requirement under Art 176 is complied with, the House should not transact legislative business. "So, governor cannot refuse to deliver the address," he said.

Referring to Art 163, he stressed that the governor is bound to act on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, except in matters where the Constitution expressly confers discretion. He cited Dr B R Ambedkar's explanation in the Constituent Assembly that Art 163 does not confer a general power on the governor to disregard ministerial advice, and that discretion is limited and specific.

Drawing from Constituent Assembly debates, he quoted H C Kamath's warning that "vesting discretionary powers in an unelected governor is wrong in principle and contrary to the basic tenets of democracy." He cited T T Krishnamachari to clarify that the governor had to act on the "advice of his ministers" and discretion was only an exception.

Recalling the intervention of K Krishnaswamy Iyer on May 30, 1949, Ponnanna said Iyer had emphasised that "the governor is only a constitutional head, while real executive power vests in the ministry responsible to the legislature"

Ponnanna quoted the 7-judge Constitution Bench ruling in Shamsher Singh Vs State of Punjab (1974), and 5-judge ruling in Nabam Rebia & Bamang Felix Vs Deputy Speaker, Arunachal Pradesh Assembly (2016), where Supreme Court categorically ruled the governor has no general discretionary power beyond what is expressly permitted under Art 163.

TB dam crest gate work: Expert gives 'proof' of Karnataka 'taking back' Rs 10 crore

HOSAPETE (VIJAYANAGAR DISTRICT), DHNS

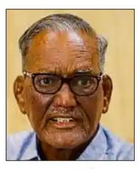
Dam safety expert Kannaiah Naidu has clarified that his statement that Rs 10 crore out of the Rs 35.62 crore provided by Andhra Pradesh for various purposes related to the Tungabhadra dam had been 'taken back' by Karnataka are based on a letter from the Tungabhadra Board secretary.

The money had been released by AP for replacing the reservoir's crest gates, salaries and transporation charges of workers deputed for the work and other expenses.

DH has accessed the letter by Board secretary O R K Reddy to the additional chief secretary of the state's finance department in this regard, a copy of which was sent to the Board chairman too. Naidu had said on January 22 that the Karnataka government had taken back Rs 10 crore (via book adjustment) and this could slow down gate replacement works.

Minister Shivaraj Tangadagi had, on Tuesday, refuted Naidu's claims, saying the state had released Rs 10 crore for the works.

"Your minister says I am lying. But the Board secretary's letter is proof of my charges. What does he have to say now? I have no intention to interfere in the dam's affairs. I had to clarify on this since officials aren't able to say the truth publicly," Naidu told *DH*.


Dam safety expert Kannaiah Naidu

What the letter says

"The AP government gives Rs 390.66 crore per year for the maintenance of the TB dam, its right bank canals and other expenses. On November 26, 2025, the AP government transferred Rs 20 crore to purchase materials for the gate replacement works, to the account of the Board, functioning under the Karnataka government," the letter says.

"The Karnataka government too released Rs 10 crore to the Board as its share. On December 17, the AP government released Rs 35.62 crore for salary and transporation expenses. Instead of transferring this money to the Board's account, the Karnataka government instructed its treasury department to remit only Rs 25.62 crore," the letter adds.

The secretary's letter requests for early transfer of the remainder amount so that gate replacement works can continue without hurdles.

On Tuesday, farmer leaders of Vijayanagar and Ballari districts submitted a memorandum to O R K Reddy, during which he reportedly urged the farmers to pressure the government to release Rs 10 crore.

ALL EARS

Ministers Sharanabasappa Darshanapur and Shivanand Patil listen attentively during a discussion in the Legislative Council on Tuesday. DH PHOTO/RANJU P

Congress, Opposition battle it out in Council

▸ **BENGALURU, DHNS:** An intense debate between Congress and Opposition NDA on the governor's address to the joint session of the legislature dominated proceedings of the Council on Tuesday.

While Congress' Ivan D'Souza began speaking on the motion of thanks to the governor's address, BJP and JD(S) objected, citing a statement by Minor Education Minister and leader of the House N S Boseraju, where he had criticised the behaviour of the governor, and had termed the governor a "puppet" of the Centre.

Referring to this, leader of the Opposition Chalavadi Narayanaswamy wondered how D'Souza could speak on the motion of thanks when the leader of the House had objected to it.

"Is it condemnation or thanks? The CM has said the governor's speech, no matter how long it was, has been tabled and accepted. If what he says is true, why did you do goondaism? Why did you stop him? A Dalit Governor was insulted. Was it right?"

While Ivan proceeded, BJP and JD(S) legislators objected to it and shouted slogans. Deputy chairperson M K Pranesh, who was in the chair, adjourned the proceedings.

Defunct Kannada Sangha at BEML draws KDA chairman's ire

BENGALURU, DHNS: Expressing concern over the fading presence of local languages at central PSUs, Purushothama Bilimale, chairman of the Kannada Development Authority (KDA), directed officials at BEML's Bengaluru complex to take steps to immediately revive the defunct workers' Kannada Sangha.

Chairing a meeting to review implementation of Kannada initiatives at BEML's head office on Tuesday, Bilimale said the Sangha at the Bengaluru unit had remained inactive for over a year. He called this a "regrettable development" at a time when the number of local workers in PSUs is dwindling.

"In this era of globalisation, market languages dominate, often pushing local languages to the background," he said.

Bilimale warned that if cultural and linguistic associations within public institutions decline, the survival of local culture in a professional environment becomes precarious. He noted that globalisation had driven 240 languages in India into oblivion, with a further 390 likely to follow suit in the next 50 years.

Hiring and branding

The KDA chief issued a series of directives to ensure Kannada holds primacy in BEML's administrative and recruitment processes.

With BEML set to begin recruitment for 'group C' employees, Bilimale mandated that notifications be published in Kannada and priority be given to local candidates.

He pointed out that BEML's logo currently features only Hindi and English. He directed officials to incorporate Kannada into the logo and include it as an optional language on the company's website.

The authority chief suggested publishing technical brochures in Kannada to help the local students and educational institutions understand BEML's indigenous technology.

The meeting was attended by BEML's director (HR) Debi Prasad Satpathy, KDA secretary Santhosh Hanagall and other senior officials.

BJP corners excise minister over 'Rs 6k cr graft', seeks his scalp

'Suspicion will turn to chief minister, if Thimmapur is not dropped from Cabinet'

BENGALURU, DHNS:

Members of the Opposition BJP, on Tuesday, demanded the resignation of Excise Minister R B Thimmapur in the Legislative Council, over alleged corruption in his department.

The House witnessed a heated debate when BJP members demanded the resignation of the minister and demanded reply from Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

The Opposition members said that the needle of suspicion would point to the chief minister, if Thimmapur wasn't dropped from the Cabinet.

"For past two-and-a-half-years, widespread corruption has taken place in excise department. To issue one licence, bribes ranging from Rs 80 lakh to Rs 1.50 crore are demanded. For a CL-7 licence approval, out of Rs 80 lakh bribe, first instalment of Rs 25 lakh was being received when excise commissioner, along with two others, was caught red-handed by Lokayukta officials. No further evidence is needed. Without blessings of the minister, such dealings cannot happen. Audio recordings related to minister's son are circulating. Taking moral responsibility, Thimmappur should resign," said leader of the Opposition Chalavadi Narayanaswamy.

BJP member N Ravikumar quoted a statement of Guruswamy, Karnataka Wine Merchants' Association (from the CM's constituency), on the massive corruption to the tune of Rs 6,000 crore in the department.

BJP state president B Y Vijayendra, leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly R Ashoka, leader of the JD(S) legislature party Suresh Babu and other leaders of the two parties stage a protest demanding resignation of Excise Minister R B Thimmapur, in front of the Gandhi statue on the Vidhana Soudha premises on Tuesday. DH PHOTO/B K JANARDHAN

"Even though five or six such cases have been reported, no action has been taken. Even when caught red-handed, no action is taken—what does this mean? The share of who got how much must be revealed. Silence of the CM on this matter has raised suspicion," he said.

Ravikumar demanded judicial inquiry into the matter. "Let the minister step down from office and let the government order judicial inquiry. If the inquiry proves no corruption, he can return as minister," he said.

Members of the ruling party, including ministers Chaluvaryaswamy, Santosh Lad and N S Boseraju, strongly objected to Siddaramaiah's name being dragged.

"If it is a Rs 6,000 crore scam, where is the Enforcement Directorate? What is it doing?," Lad asked.

Party demands thorough probe into excise dept 'scam'

The Opposition BJP on Tuesday demanded a thorough probe into a scam it claimed was worth Rs 6,000 crore in the excise department. The BJP and the JD(S) lawmakers staged a protest at the Mahatma Gandhi statue in the Vidhana Soudha against the Congress government, especially Excise Minister R B Thimmapur.

"The wine merchants association has pegged the scam at Rs 6,000 crore. How much of this goes to CM Siddaramaiah, his deputy DK Shivakumar, Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge?" Leader of the Opposition Chalavadi Narayanaswamy said.

BJP state president B Y Vijayendra demanded a "proper investigation" either by a sitting high court judge or the CBI.

On Tuesday morning, the BJP members trooped into the well of the Legislative Assembly, reiterating their demand for a discussion on irregularities in the excise department.

"The Wine Merchants' Association is planning to meet Rahul Gandhi, the President and the Prime Minister. The state is being put to shame," Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka said.

Thimmapur rejected the allegations. "There's is no evidence. Nothing. The Opposition is unnecessarily trying to defame me and bring a bad name to the government. If they have evidence, let them show it," he said.

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said the allegations were "politically motivated." Speaking to reporters, Shivakumar said: "These (allegations) are bogus. What they're claiming is politically motivated. They are trying to defame a Dalit minister."

State may set min wages higher than...

Wages, From Page 1

The enforcement of the four labour codes on November 21, 2025, has repealed the Minimum Wages Act, 1948.

While the state government's notification was for 84 scheduled employments, the very concept of scheduled employments has been done away with in the labour codes.

Though the method of calculating minimum wage proposed by the labour department, based on Supreme Court guidelines in the landmark Reptakos Brett Case, and the method mentioned in the wage code look similar, there is one major difference.

While the Supreme Court guidelines mandate that the rent norms should correspond to the government's industrial area housing scheme, the wage code has defined it as 10% of the food and clothing expenses.

According to calculations by the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), the average house rent in Bengaluru comes to Rs 7,996.

The same union calculated food and clothing expenses to be Rs 14,229. Applying the standards of the wage code, the rent amount would be 10% of Rs 14,229, which is Rs 1,422.9.

Doing so would effectively reduce the minimum wage.

Earlier, the Joint Committee of Trade Unions (JCTU) had urged the labour department to proceed with its minimum wage proposal by arguing that there was no "legal obstacle" to proceed with its earlier notification.

JCTU had referred to sections 68 and 69 of the code on wages, of the Union government.

Though the Payment of Wages Act, 1936, the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, Payment of Bonus Act, 1965 and Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, are repealed through the wage code, section 69 (repeal and savings) notes that any notification, nomination, appointment and so on "shall be in force" to the extent that they are "not contrary" to the provisions of this code.

K'taka likely to withdraw...

RTE, From Page 1

Bangarappa said he has no objections to withdrawing the amendments to Rule 4 of the RTE Act. Though Karnataka was the first state to implement the RTE Act, in 2019, the state brought amendments to the rule 4 of the Act by exempting private schools if government/aided schools are nearby/neighborhood (within 1 km).

The government justified it by saying that it was done to increase admissions at government schools. With this amendment, the state government prioritised admissions at government and aided schools. This has declined demand for admissions under RTE, with 90% of the seats left vacant. SC directive

On January 14, the Supreme Court directed states to strictly enforce the 25% reservation for Economically Weaker Section children in private unaided non minority schools under the RTE Act, 2009. Describing it as a 'national mission', the court mandated that states frame binding rules to ensure that the quota is filled, emphasising it is a legal obligation, not a policy option.

In 2016-17, the admissions under RTE were decreased due to various technical issues, including submission of fake certificates.

Of the 86,000-plus applications, around 34,000 were rejected due to invalid caste/income certificates and over 24,000 were rejected because of invalid Aadhaar/Voter ID.

◆ WEATHER ◆

Overview: Dry weather prevailed over Coastal Karnataka, South Interior Karnataka and North Interior Karnataka

Forecast Jan 28: Dry weather likely to prevail over the state.

INTERIOR NORTH

Stations	Max	Min	Rain
Belagavi	30	18.8	00
Bidar	29.2	14.5	00
Vijayapura	30.5	19.5	00
Dharwad	31.2	19	00
Haveri	31.8	19.2	00
Kalaburagi	33	19.4	00
Raichur	30.4	20	00
COASTAL			
Honnavar	34.5	21.5	00
Karwar	34.4	22.4	00
Shirali	NA	NA	NA
Mangaluru	34	23.8	00

INTERIOR SOUTH

Stations	Max	Min	Rain
Agumbe	NA	NA	NA
Bengaluru	24.2	16.6	1.6
Ballari	NA	NA	NA
Chamarajanagar	NA	NA	NA
Chikkamagaluru	NA	NA	NA
Chitradurga	30	19	00
Davangere	31.5	15	00
Hassan	31	12.8	00
Mysuru	29.8	17.4	00
Madikeri	NA	NA	NA
Kolar	24.6	16.6	00

OTHER STATIONS

New Delhi	23.2	08	00
Kolkata	27.5	15.8	00
Mumbai	31.4	22.6	00
Chennai	29.5	22.1	00
Pune	31.6	17.4	00
Hyderabad	29.7	19	00
Th'puram	34.8	23.9	00

Bengaluru homes see 28% rise in power use

Power, From Page 1

In Bengaluru city, Bescom saw around 19% increase in its residential consumer base over the last six years, owing to an increase in migration to the city.

Between 2019-20 and 2024-25, the number of residential consumers in the city increased by as much as 9.8 lakh.

In the commercial sector, new IT parks and data centres have fuelled the growth and the number of commercial establishments have also increased by around 19%.

"Tech companies along with new IT parks are the major contributors in the commercial consumption sector," the senior Bescom official said.

However, officials opined that the demand would have been higher if not for the disruption caused by the Covid pandemic.

"Post Covid, owing to remote working options, the residential consumption has grown significantly and the commercial consumption, which could have increased drastically, has seen a satisfactory growth," another official explained.

To meet the increasing demand, the energy department has increased power production significantly, a senior official in the department said.

"Over the last two-three years, our production has improved significantly. Also, we have taken up renewable energy projects, and the share of renewable energy has increased. During summer, based on the forecast for demand, we have had power swapping agreements with other states," the official explained.

Power consumption in Bengaluru
(in million units)

COMMERCIAL	
2019-20	3,855
2020-21	2,533
2021-22	2,750
2022-23	3,692
2023-24	4,520
2024-25	5,105
RESIDENTIAL	
2019-20	5,765
2020-21	5,574
2021-22	5,657
2022-23	6,183
2023-24	6,988
2024-25	7,400

Pact to counter global turbulence

Deal, From Page 1

The India-EU defence and security partnership will not only take the two sides to a new level of strategic trust but also pave the way for the two sides to work together to counter "the full range of security threats we face, in the Indo-Pacific, in Europe and around the world," da Costa said.

"As the world's largest democracies and champions of multilateralism, the EU and India share the responsibility of upholding international law, with the United Nations Charter at its core."

Modi said the defence and security partnership would help India and the EU work more closely on counter terrorism, maritime security, and cybersecurity. "This will also strengthen our shared commitment to a rules-based international order. Our cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region will grow, and our defence companies will gain new opportunities to work together on co-development and co-production," he said.

"Our partnership includes a dedicated dialogue on space security, from situational awareness to secure connectivity and stronger cooperation on counterterrorism," added von der Leyen.

With the Trump Administration restricting the issuance of visas for travel for work and study, the India-EU mobility pact signalled Europe's openness to Indian talent through smoother, rules-based movement of students and professionals.

The new framework for mobility will open opportunities for students, workers, and professionals from India in Europe, the prime minister said. They also adopted "Towards 2030: A Joint India-European Union Comprehensive Strategic Agenda".

Woman elopes; hubby, relative end lives

DAVANGERE, DHNS: A newly-wed man reportedly ended his life after his spouse eloped with her male friend.

Upon learning about this, the bride's brother-in-law, who arranged the wedding, also died by suicide.

Deceased

The deceased have been identified as Harish (30) and Rudresh (36).

A case has been registered at the Davangere rural police station.

India concludes talks on its largest FTA...

FTA, From Page 1

The deal comes amid volatile trade policies and new tariff threats by the US on both India and the European countries. Analysts see the India-EU free trade deal as their strategic hedge against US President Donald Trump's volatile trade policies.

European Commission President von der Leyen, who has hailed the EU-India FTA as "mother of all deals" sent a clear message to the Trump administration.

"The EU and India make history today, deepening the partnership between the world's biggest democracies. We have created a free trade zone of two billion people, with both sides set to gain economically," she said.

"We have sent a signal to the world that rules-based cooperation still delivers great outcomes. And, best of all, this is only the start - we will build on this success, and grow our relationship to be even stronger," von der Leyen added.

This is the fourth free trade deal India has sealed since the US announced imposition of steep 50% tariffs on imports of the majority of Indian goods. India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement was signed in July 2025 followed by similar deals with Oman and New Zealand in December.

With the EU deal, Goyal claimed that India will have preferential trade agreements with 37 developed nations. This is the eighth free trade deal concluded under the Modi government.

The minister claimed that labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, apparel, leather, footwear, marine products, automobiles and gems and jewellery would be among the big beneficiaries of the India-EU free trade deal. Once implemented, 93% of Indian shipments will enjoy duty-free access to the EU member countries.

Not just exporters, the deal also brings good news for the Indian consumers. The items like luxury cars, wine, beer, chocolates, breads and olive oil imported from the EU countries will become cheaper.

According to a statement released by the European Commission, India has agreed to cut tariffs on wines from 150% to 75% at entry into force and eventually to 20% in five years.

Tariffs on olive oil will go down from 45% to 0%, while processed agricultural products such as bread and confectionery will see tariffs of up to 50% eliminated.

India has also agreed to cut tariffs on cars gradually from 110% to 10%, while on auto parts it will be reduced to zero in five to 10 years. Tariffs ranging up to 44% on machinery, 22% on chemicals and 11% on pharmaceuticals will also be mostly eliminated.

The two sides have also agreed to ease non-tariff barriers through strengthened regulatory cooperation, greater transparency and streamlined customs, Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) procedures, and technical barriers to trade disciplines.

However, there is no substantial relief on the carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM) regulation of the EU.

"Through CBAM provisions, commitments have been secured including a forward-looking most-favoured nation assurance extending flexibilities if any granted to third countries under the regulation," as per a statement released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Man spins 'ED' tale, cheats...

Matrimony, From Page 1

Gowda, who was using an ID-VOK373766, told the woman that he was a businessman and regularly chatted with her.

In one of the chats, Gowda told the woman that his business was stuck as all his accounts were blocked or frozen by the investigators due the ED case.

Later, in another ruse, he claimed his father was extremely unwell and that he urgently needed money. To back this, he shared some documents, the FIR noted.

The woman, trusting the person as she was looking for a potential match, began sending him money. Till January 18, she had transferred Rs 50,04,484 to the bank accounts shared by the suspect.

When the contact abruptly ended, she realised she had been defrauded and approached the police.

The North Cybercrime Police on January 20 registered an FIR under Sections 66C (identity theft) and 66D (punishment for cheating by personation by using computer resource) of the Information Technology (IT) Act and BNS Section 318 (cheating). A probe is underway.

"This is a classic matrimonial scam, where the suspect gained the trust of the victim and then cheated her. This is just one method. There are other modus operandi where, using similar matrimonial platforms, the suspects, after gaining the trust of the victims, lure them into fake stock and crypto investment schemes," a senior police officer with expertise in cybercrime probe, told *DH*.

In a similar case registered at the North Cybercrime Station, the same day, a 37-year-old man from Hesaraghatta, looking for a match on Shaadi.com, was cheated of Rs 23.37 lakh.

In this case, the suspect, Pooja Singh on the matrimony platform, convinced the victim to start online trading. Trusting her, as she had spoken to him over video call, the victim wired the large sum between August 12, 2025 and January 9, after he was told he could gain his investments back in "dollars". A probe is underway.

The officer quoted previously also said the scam operates on a large scale outside the country, with organised cybercrime dens deploying Artificial Intelligence (AI) and deepfake technology and use convincing personas by understanding the tastes of victims, who look for matches on dating apps or matrimonial apps.

BANGALORE URBAN ZILLA PANCHAYATH
Executive Engineer, Panchayath Raj Engineering Division
1st Floor, Zilla Panchayat Buidling, S. Kariyappa Road
Banashankari (Near Banashankari Temple), Bangalore-560070
No.EE/PRED/BNG(U)/TND/AE-1/35/2025-26 Dated: 22.01.2026
TENDER NOTIFICATION (through KPPP Portal only) (SINGLE COVER SYSTEM)
Tenders are invited through KPPP Portal by the Executive Engineer, P.R.E.D. Bangalore Urban, For **MLA Grants and 4202 Grants.** The work details can obtained from the KPPP Website The Tender Documents can be obtained and submitted on or before **Dated: 10.02.2026 upto 4.00 pm.** Further details can be obtained from web site at **http://www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in** or contact this office during office working hours.
Sd/- **Executive Engineer**
Panchayath Raj Engineering Division
Bangalore Urban Dist.,Bangalore.
DIPR/CP/5229/SA/2025-26

KARNATAKA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(CIN: U40109KA1999SGC025521)
No: SEE/Tr(Op)/S-Circle/EE(O)/AEE-2/25-26/5017-19 Date:23.01.2026
TENDER NOTIFICATION (Through KPPP mode only)
KPTCL invites bid against enquiry No: KPTCL/SEE/TR(Op)/C-S/EE(O)/AEE-4/2024-25/EPR-81/Call-3 Dated: 18.01.2025 for **"Design, Manufacture, Testing and Supply of C-Type Wedge Connectors suitable for different sizes required for replacement of age old, bolted type connectors at various sub-stations coming under Subramanyapura Division of Tr(M) Circle-South, Bengaluru",** Conforming to our Technical Specifications, F.O.R.D. at Store/Site Basis, including insurance and transportation **on Total Turnkey Basis on Percentage tender basis.** The bids will be received through KPP Portal only. The details regarding participation in the E tendering process can be obtained by logging on to KPTCL website **https://kptcl.karnataka.gov.in** with hyperlink **"E Procurement KPTCL"** or **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** on or after **29.01.2026.** Other details can be obtained from the office of the undersigned.
Sd/- Superintending Engineer (Ele), Transmission (Op) Circle-South, KPTCL, Office Complex, Ground Floor, A.R. Circle, Bengaluru-09

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಬ್ಯಾಂಕ್ KARNATAKA GRAMEENA BANK
Scheduled Bank Owned by Government
General Administration Wing, Head Office Ballari
TENDER NOTICE
Quotations are invited in the prescribed format in a sealed envelope for Renewal of Banker's Indemnity and other Asset insurance Policies from **01.04.2026 to 31.03.2027.** For further details please visit our Bank's Website http://karnatakagb.bank.in. Interested Insurance companies may go through the tender and submit their response in time. Amendments if any will be hosted in the Bank's website only. Quotations duly filled in complete with proper seal & signature should be submitted to below address on or before **17.02.2026 up to 5.00 P.M.**
The Chief Manager,
Karnataka Grameena Bank, Head Office No.32, Sanganakal Road
Gandhinagar, Ballari-583103. Contact No: 08392-236428/429
To download the application please visit our website http://karnatakagb.bank.in

ಹುಬ್ಬಳ್ಳಿ-ಧಾರವಾಡ ಮಹಾನಗರ ಪಾಲಿಕೆ
ಕಾರ್ಯನಿರ್ವಾಹಕ ಅಭಿಯಂತರರು (ಉತ್ತರ)
ಪತ್ರ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ ನಂ. ಎಚ್‌ಡಿಎಮ್‌ಸಿ/61/12/2025-26 ದಿನಾಂಕ: 27-01-2026
ಅಲ್ಪಾವಧಿ / ಇ-ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಅಧಿಸೂಚನೆ
ಉಲ್ಲೇಖ : ಜಾಹಿರಾತು ನಂ:- 972 ದಿನಾಂಕ:- 12-12-2025
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TDP asks govt to brief Parl about FTAs and US trade talks

NEW DELHI, DHNS: NDA ally TDP on Tuesday asked the government to brief the Parliament about the recently concluded Foreign Trade Agreements (FTAs) and negotiations with the United States.

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) Lok Sabha floor leader Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu made the demand at the customary all-party meeting convened by the government, a day ahead of the Budget Session.

Devarayalu said it is important for the government to brief the Parliament about the FTAs concluded by India in the recent past, including the one with the European Union (EU), as well as the trade negotiations with the US in the midst of President Donald Trump's new tariff regime.

CPM's John Brittas, Samajwadi Party's Ramgopal Yadav, AAP's Sanjay Singh and CPI's P Sandosh Kumar demanded an explanation from the government on the comments made by Trump on India with regard to tariff and trade relations.

Air India unveils custom-styled cabin interiors of Boeing 787-9

AJITH ATHRADY
HYDERABAD, DHNS

Air India on Tuesday unveiled the custom-styled cabin interiors of its first line-fit Boeing 787-9 aircraft on Tuesday here.

This is an important step in the airline's ongoing fleet and brand transformation under the Tata Group. The aircraft, registered as VT-AWA, is the first wide-body jet to roll out of Boeing's production line specifically to Air India's design and specifications, a statement from the company said.

Delivered on January 11 after a non-stop flight from Everett, Washington, to Delhi, the Dreamliner is scheduled to enter commercial service on the Mumbai–Frankfurt route from February 1.

In the days to come, it will also be deployed across other European destinations, as well as routes to East Asia and Australia.

"The arrival of this new Boeing 787-9, the first production widebody from the 470 aircraft-strong order signed three years ago, is a significant moment in Air India's 5-year Vihaan.AI transformation programme, " Campbell Wilson, Chief Executive Officer & Managing Director, Air India, told reporters here.

All 26 existing 787-8 aircraft are currently undergoing retrofit, while 19 additional 787-9 aircraft will be delivered with identical interiors. The retrofit programme is expected to be completed by mid-2027, with the first upgraded aircraft returning to service in the coming weeks.

T'gana urban local body polls on February 11

HYDERABAD, DHNS: Around 116 municipalities and seven municipal corporations in Telangana will go to the polls on February 11, with vote counting scheduled for February 13. the State Election Commissioner announced on Tuesday.

Around two years into its term, the Congress government will face its first major urban electoral test.

Obsession with growth figures masks rising inequality: Abhijit Banerjee

Nobel laureate **Abhijit Banerjee** offered an assessment of the Indian economy, cautioning that a fixation on "nonsense" growth figures is obscuring a dangerous explosion of inequality. In an exclusive interaction with *DH*'s **Ashwin BM**, Banerjee reflected on his move to Europe, the one-sided debate on freebies, and the erosion of institutional data integrity.

You are moving your base to Europe. Beyond the personal shift, should we expect a different direction in your research or in the technology of your work?
I don't think much will change. I'm perhaps too old to reinvent myself, and there's no expectation that I should. We are moving from one familiar stable to another, working with a bunch of younger colleagues, whom we've mentored for a long time. Also, I'll be keeping my job half-time at MIT for at least the next seven years. J-PAL (Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab) is headquartered there, and since it's at the heart of what we do, we have no option but to keep running it.

In India, the debate around 'freebies versus welfare' is highly polarised.
I find this conversation extraordinarily one-sided. We are so happy handing out tax breaks, land transfers, regulatory loopholes, and government contracts to a select few companies, yet we never calculate the volume of money. Whether it's specific tax breaks or credits for 'Make in India', if you compare those amounts to freebies,

Nobel laureate Abhijit Banerjee

you get a far more plausible perspective. We are creating a situation where even the middle class isn't catching up with the ultra-rich.

Are we ignoring the consequences of this wealth gap?
Absolutely. The accumulation of power by the ultra-rich leads to what we see in the US — control of the government by an oligarchy. It creates a broad coalition of elites that is often anti-democratic. In India, especially in the North, we don't see this resentment reflected in politics yet. Parties keep winning on elitist and divisive planks.

How are global shocks, like the potential for Trump-era style tariffs, impacting our everyday reality?
Many sectors are struggling. The exchange rate is under pressure. We try to offset tariffs by lowering the exchange rate so that the rising prices don't translate into higher dollar prices.

That brings us to the 'data gap'. Is the government intentionally suppressing the numbers?
We are guessing. The government has used the fact that NSS (National Sample Survey) data doesn't always match their desired picture to withhold it. If officials fear they might be fired for producing the 'wrong' numbers, they won't do the job.

What is the one economic misunderstanding among Indian voters that concerns you most?
This obsession with growth rates — 8.45% versus 8.25%... It is complete nonsense because our underlying data on small industries is so bad that these figures are just projections. Growth has become a marker for national pride, but it hasn't generated formal employment for a long time.

'No reverse gear': Govt firm as Opposition demands debate

All-party meeting ends without consensus

AMRITA MADHUKALYA
NEW DELHI, DHNS

BUDGET SESSION
- Oppn demands debates on rural jobs law, voter rolls, pollution, statehood, caste rules
- Rijiju says, "No reverse gear, law must be followed"
- Congress flags delay in circulation of legislative agenda

The government and the Opposition are headed for another showdown over the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin), or VB-G RAM G Bill, and the Special Intensive Revision (SIR).

At an all-party meeting chaired by Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday, ahead of the Budget Session, the Opposition demanded discussions on these issues, but the government turned down the request. Opposition leaders also sought debates on pollution, statehood for Jammu and Kashmir and UGC rules on caste discrimination.

Sharp differences marked the meeting, which was convened to seek cooperation from political parties for the smooth conduct of the session. However, it ended without consensus as the Opposition pressed for debates on a range of issues.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said the government would not agree to reopening discussions on the VB-G RAM G law, which replaced the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. "Once a law is before the nation, we have to follow it. We cannot reverse the gear and go back," he said.

He added that Opposition members would be free to raise their concerns during the debate on the President's Address or the Union Budget, but ruled out separate, issue-specific discussions. Responding to complaints about the non-circulation of the government's legislative agenda ahead of the session, he said, "Government business is shared after the President's Address," and appealed to parties to allow Parliament to function smoothly.

Opposition parties expressed dissatisfaction with the government's stance, arguing that the VB-G RAM G law carries implications for rural employment and livelihoods. They also raised concerns over the SIR, alleging that the process could lead to voter exclusion and must be debated on the floor of the House.

Congress MP K Suresh flagged the issue of the government not circulating its legislative agenda in time, a move he said limited Parliament's ability to prepare for informed debate. Trinamool Congress' Sagarika Ghose said the Opposition had sought space for discussion on many issues. "Parliament is not a one-way street. The Opposition must be given a chance to speak, and its voice must be heard," she said.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju and others, arrives for the all-party meeting ahead of the Budget session of Parliament. PTI

'Arrogant' govt can't shy away from discussions, says Cong

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

OPPN STRATEGY
- Wednesday meeting to discuss floor strategy
- First leg of Budget Session from Jan 28 to Feb 13
- Second leg from March 9 to April 2
- Cong to also raise concerns over Aravallis and statehood demand for Jammu and Kashmir

The Congress on Tuesday warned the "arrogant" Modi government that it cannot shy away from debating MGNREGA and Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise during the upcoming Budget Session by saying that the issues have already been discussed.

The decision to raise MGNREGA and SIR in a big way was taken at a meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Strategy Group, chaired by parliamentary party chairperson Sonia Gandhi and attended by Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi.

Kharge has scheduled a meeting of "all Opposition parties" at his office in Parliament at 10 am on Wednesday to discuss floor strategy for the first leg of the Budget Session, which runs from January 28 to February 13. The second leg will be held from March 9 to April 2.

After the meeting, Congress General Secretary Syed Naseer Hussain told reporters that one of the "big issues" the party intends to raise is the alleged attempt to repeal MGNREGA, the UPA-era rural employment guarantee scheme, at a time when the Congress has launched its 'MGNREGA Bachao Sangram'.

"Along with this, we will also raise SIR, which has created havoc and confusion among people," he said.

Asked about Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju's remarks that issues like SIR have already been debated and cannot be revisited every time, Hussain said, "The arrogant government is going ahead with the SIR despite repeated strictures from the Supreme Court."

He added that more issues have surfaced regarding SIR since the parliamentary debate during the Winter Session, and these must be debated.

Foreign policy-related concerns will also dominate the Congress' attack on the Modi government, with its MPs set to highlight US tariff issues and the "threats" made by US President Donald Trump over the Russian oil episode, among other things.

The debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address and the General Discussion on the budget is likely to see the Congress try to corner the government on a range of issues, including deaths in Indore and Ahmedabad linked to urban governance failures.

Another issue expected to be raised in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha is the latest UGC guidelines to prevent atrocities against underprivileged students.

The Congress will also highlight the "omission" of references to OBCs in the Phase 1 Census questionnaire.

Woman accuses Jana Sena MLA of sexual exploitation

S N V SUDHIR
HYDERABAD, DHNS

A video surfaced online on Tuesday in which a woman alleged that Jana Sena MLA Arava Sridhar from Railway Koduru sexually exploited her for over a year under the pretext of marriage.

The woman, who has a three-year-old child, said she had messaged the MLA on Facebook to congratulate him on his 2024 election victory. She accused him of using this acquaintance, along with promises of job assistance, to harass her, including repeated sexual exploitation.

She alleged that he lured her with false marriage vows and forced her to undergo five abortions after she became pregnant over a period of one and a half years.

The woman further alleged that the MLA made frequent calls demanding sexual favours, threatening to kill her son if she refused. She said he pressured her to divorce her husband, issuing direct warnings to the husband as well. Sridhar reportedly demanded the divorce in order to marry her, while continuing physical coercion. When they resisted, he escalated threats over the phone, sowing marital discord and warning of harm to the child. According to her, this harassment persisted for over a year. Her identity has not yet been established.

Unable to endure the ordeal, the woman — who works while her husband lives in Hyderabad — went public with videos and alleged explicit WhatsApp chats. She claimed the threats isolated her from her family, and even after her husband left with their son, Sridhar neither married her nor relented, continuing with false promises and exploitation.

BRS submits memorandum to Guv on Singareni 'irregularities'

HYDERABAD, DHNS: A delegation of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), led by its Working President KT Rama Rao (KTR), met the Governor at Raj Bhavan on Tuesday and submitted a detailed representation highlighting what the party termed as serious instances of corruption and financial irregularities under the Congress government, particularly in the Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL).

KT Rama Rao

The BRS team, comprising MPs, Members of the Legislative Assembly and Council, and senior party leaders, presented documentary evidence related to alleged misuse of public funds, irregular tendering processes, and inflated project costs in mining and solar power projects undertaken by Singareni.

Addressing the media after the meeting, KTR said that the party had formally brought to the Governor's notice the alleged "large-scale plunder" in Singareni and the government's failure to provide credible explanations despite repeated disclosures made by BRS leaders, including former minister and Assembly Party Deputy Leader T Harish Rao.

Trying to steal votes of Miyas: Assam CM

SUMIR KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI, DHNS

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA
Assam Chief Minister

"Yes, we are trying to steal the votes of the Miyas. They should not vote in our country but in Bangladesh. We are making arrangements to ensure that they do not vote in Assam.

Assam Cabinet to decide on SIT report on Gogoi's 'links with Pak'

Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday said the cabinet will take a formal decision on the future course of action on the SIT report on state Congress president Gaurav Gogoi's alleged links with Pakistan on February 7, reports PTI. Sarma alleged that Gogoi and his British wife have "direct links" with Pakistan as per a presentation made by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) of Assam Police formed to probe the controversial matter.

Responding to the Opposition's charge of "vote chori" through the ongoing special revision of the electoral rolls, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday said he was trying to "steal" votes of the 'Miyas', a derogatory term used to refer to Bengali-speaking Muslims.

"Miyas should not be voting in Assam, they should vote in Bangladesh. We have taken steps to ensure that they can't vote in Assam, but this is preliminary work. When SIR (Special Intensive Revision) comes to Assam, four to five lakh Miya voters will be removed. Let Congress say whatever they want to, my job is to give troubles to the Miyas," Sarma told reporters in Guwahati.

Sarma's statement came two days after the Congress-led alliance of the Opposition parties alleged that many genuine voters, including the victims of the ongoing evictions, were being illegally removed from the electoral rolls during the Special Revision.

The parties alleged that many fake objections were being filed by BJP workers to remove the genuine voters.

"Miyas have reached Duliajan, Tinsukia. A few days back, I was going through some records in Tinsukia, which showed that Assamese people are selling land, and the Miyas are buying it. So if we don't take steps now to stop them from going to Upper Assam, when we will do? No Assamese people are affected in the SIR exercise," Sarma said.

BJP and its allies accuse the Bengali-speaking Muslims of being "infiltrators from Bangladesh" and a threat to the identity of the indigenous people in Assam. The government has intensified its drive to evict the Bengali-speaking Muslims from forests and government land in the run-up to the Assembly elections slated for March-April. Foreigners' issue takes centre stage in elections in Assam.

Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi said the CM was deliberately making such comments to play polarisation politics ahead of polls.

Congress, DMK deadlock over seat-sharing continues

E T B SIVAPRIYAN
CHENNAI, DHNS

ALLIANCE CHURN
- DMK insists Cong accept the 2021 formula under which the party was allotted 25 Assembly constituencies
- Congress says DMK should immediately constitute a committee to hold talks with alliance partners on seat-sharing
- The Assembly elections are due in April-May

Seat-sharing talks between the DMK and Congress are deadlocked, with the former delaying the constitution of a committee to discuss numbers with alliance partners and insisting that the latter accept the 2021 formula under which the party was allotted 25 Assembly constituencies.

As the leadership of both parties dithers on the alliance talks, the Assembly elections are due in April-May, the second-rung leadership of the DMK and Congress are fighting it out on the ground and on social media.

DMK MLA from Madurai (North) G Thalapathy kicked up a storm on Monday, saying Congress MPs Manickam Tagore and S Jothimani, who demanded that their party should have a share in power in Tamil Nadu, should not be given seats in the next elections and belittled the Congress for not even forming booth-level committees in many constituencies.

The statement drew a sharp reaction from TNCC chief K Selvaperunthagai, who demanded that Chief Minister M K Stalin should act against Thalapathy for "insulting" the Congress and its cadres. DMK organising secretary R S Bharathi issued a statement asking leaders not to comment on alliance partners.

Congress leaders told *DH* that the DMK should immediately constitute a committee to hold talks with alliance partners on seat-sharing and keep engaging to put an end to rumours and bickering among leaders of both parties. They said the talks are not moving anywhere with the DMK making it clear to the Congress leadership that it cannot go beyond the "25-seat offer", let alone discussing power-sharing.

"They have to keep engaging us, at least for alliance. They have to be willing to listen to our demands and decide accordingly. Pre-deciding the number of seats before formally deciding the number does not bode well. We approached the DMK in December, and they have not even identified the people who will talk to us," a senior Congress leader told *DH*.

Lulu Group chief denies talks with Tharoor on CPM alliance

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS: Malayali NRI businessman Yusuff Ali has denied reports claiming that he held talks with Congress MP Shashi Tharoor regarding the latter's possible alliance with the CPM.

Speaking to reporters on Tuesday, Yusuff said he had not even met Tharoor recently. "The reports that I held talks with Tharoor are baseless. I did not meet him recently. He had visited my home a few months ago when he came to the UAE," said the Lulu Group chairman and managing director.

Reports had suggested that Tharoor, who was reportedly upset over being ignored by AICC leader Rahul Gandhi during his recent visit to Kochi, was being wooed by the CPM, and that an NRI businessman had held discussions with him in Dubai.

Tharoor had earlier maintained that these reports were mere media speculation with no truth in them.

Meanwhile, Congress Legislature Party leader in Kerala, V D Satheesan, said on Tuesday that Tharoor remained in constant touch with party leaders and continued to be an integral part of theparty. He also dismissed reports of Tharoor allying with CPM.

MELODY PAUSE

'I am calling it off': Arijit Singh retires from playback singing

NEW DELHI, PTI

"I am calling it off, it was a wonderful journey," said Arijit Singh on Tuesday, announcing that he will not be taking up any new assignments as a playback singer, a decision that sent shockwaves across his fan base.

In a message shared on his social media pages, Singh said he has decided to step away from playback singing, a move that comes at the peak of his career as one of the most popular and in-demand voices in Hindi cinema.

Arijit Singh

"Hello, Happy New Year to all. I want to thank you all for giving me so much love all these years as listeners. I am happy to announce that I am not going to be taking any new assignments as a playback vocalist from now on. I am calling it off. It was a wonderful journey," he wrote.

The 38-year-old clarified that he would continue to make music independently and complete existing commitments.

"I am a fan of good music and in future will be learning more and do more on my own as a small little artist. I still have to finish some pending commitments, will finish them. So you might get some releases this year," he added.

While Singh did not elaborate on the reasons behind his decision, the announcement was met with disbelief, with many fans expressing their dismay.

Singh's rise in the Indian music industry has been nothing short of meteoric. He broke into the big league with the soulful hit *Tum Hi Ho* from *Aashiqui 2* in 2013.

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Judicial autonomy and shaky safeguards

Questions about judicial independence in India and the processes of the Supreme Court have been raised in the past. They assume greater significance coming from a serving judge at the Court. Justice Ujjal Bhuyan has expressed disappointment over the Supreme Court collegium's decision to shuffle the official transfer of a high court judge, at the request of the government. The collegium had transferred Justice Atul Sreedharan from the Madhya Pradesh High Court to the Chhattisgarh High Court, but later moved him to the High Court in Allahabad. Considering that transfers of judges in the higher courts are the prerogative of the collegium and that the executive overriding established and independent processes of the judiciary sets an unwelcome precedent, Justice Bhuyan's concerns are credible.

The recommendation for the transfer in October 2025, based on a reconsideration sought by the government, left Justice Sreedharan disadvantaged. He would have become part of the collegium in the Chhattisgarh High Court, but he stood significantly lower in the seniority ranking at the Allahabad High Court. The reconsideration request was also seen in the light of some of Justice Sreedharan's rulings, which may not have pleased the government. During his tenure in the Jammu and Kashmir High Court, Justice Sreedharan's bench struck down several preventive detention orders under the Public Safety Act. In the Madhya Pradesh High Court, a bench he led directed the police to file an FIR against minister Vijay Shah for his remarks against Army officer Colonel Sofiya Qureshi, who briefed the media during Operation Sindoor. The lack of clarity regarding the recommendation for the judge's transfer to a specific court was noted following the collegium's decision, raising speculation about the objectives of the move.

Collegium's decision to accommodate the government's interests signals overreach and troubling compliance

The Supreme Court established the collegium system as part of efforts to protect the independence of the judiciary. In 2015, it struck down the National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, which envisaged a six-member body to oversee judicial appointments, and retained the collegium system. Justice Bhuyan has echoed concerns others have expressed over the government trying to influence the judiciary and the latter succumbing to the pressure. Former Supreme Court judge Madan B Lokur has said that the government once requested the transfer of a judge from the Delhi High Court over a judgment he had delivered. The collegium did well to disclose the reason for changing its decision regarding the transfer of Justice Sreedharan. But that it entertained the government's request on the matter goes against some of its key founding principles.

Uniformity is integral to prison reform

The Karnataka State Prisons and Correctional Services Department's decision to ban cooked food from private sources for inmates is the right step towards ensuring institutional discipline, equality, and dismantling entrenched VIP culture. According to the government, major facilities, including the Bengaluru Central Prison at Parappana Agrahara, hold a four-star certification from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and are designated 'eat right campuses' signifying adherence to prescribed standards of hygiene, safety, and nutrition. This effectively eliminates the justification for home food. Notably, the ban is not limited to food alone; strict caps on private clothing and bedding further strip away visible markers of social status. The ban also addresses operational risks. Cooked food and other materials from outside have long served as conduits for smuggling drugs, mobile phones, and weapons, while placing a heavy inspection burden on understaffed prisons. While access to special facilities creates inequality inside prison walls, they also lead to accountability grey zones in cases of food poisoning or illness. This holistic approach ensures that wealth and influence find no expression, whether on the plate or in the cell.

However, these measures are not without legitimate concerns. Prison dinners are typically served early – around 5.30 pm – creating a nearly 14-hour gap until breakfast, and the onus is on the department to ensure meal timings are as humane as their nutritional content. Moreover, certification alone cannot be the end of the story. Since FSSAI does not monitor kitchens continuously, senior officers must conduct periodic inspections to ensure standards are maintained.

The ban on private privileges in Karnataka's prisons is an assured first step towards structural changes

For Karnataka's prisons to truly transform, these administrative steps must be followed by deeper structural reforms. Addressing the Hithendra Committee's findings on persistent internal corruption is essential, as is tackling the overcrowding that directly impacts the prisoners' hygiene and health. Caste-based discrimination, where those from oppressed communities are assigned menial or degrading tasks, as acknowledged by the Supreme Court, must be eradicated. With a 40% staff vacancy rate, prisons lack the manpower necessary for thorough security checks, often resulting in administrative shortcuts. While broader human rights concerns persist, NIMHANS has flagged the urgent need for specialised mental health interventions. By enforcing uniformity, Karnataka has sent a message that prisons are spaces of correction, not privilege; however, the journey towards a truly humane and constitutional correctional system remains a distant goal.

RESTRICTED COVERAGE

The perils of private equity in India's healthcare

In a sector driven by profits, stronger public investment and regulation can restore affordability

JAGDISH RATTANANI

India's health sector has historically suffered from poor public investments and weak private sector alignment with the end goals of delivering quality care that is available, accessible and affordable. The nation's response has been, in one part, to allow the injection of private equity into the sector to attract capital and drive expansion. The latest PE sector reports released in recent months tell us how these investments have surged. The policy has been playing out for the last two decades or so, with a new fillip in the National Health Policy, 2017, which called the private sector "strategic partners" for "critical gap-filling" towards universal health coverage, suitably reinforced by the NITI Aayog highlighting investment opportunities.

But instead of making the sector more responsive to the needs of citizens, the red carpet rolled out to private equity has added in new and complex ways to age-old sectoral burdens. Total PE investments into healthcare and pharmaceuticals reached $5.5 billion in 2023, representing a 25% increase from the previous year, with further "notable growth" in deal activity from 2024 to 2025, according to Bain and Company, a leading global management consultancy firm, which released a global PE report earlier this month. The Global Healthcare Private Equity report published by Bain said India accounted for about 25% of Asia-Pacific healthcare private equity deal volume in 2024, making it the largest PE market in the region by volume, as reported in a graph for which underlying data was not published.

The investments will lead to more hospital beds, but the logic of PE investments and PE-led growth sits at odds with the mission of healthcare to reach all sections of a society marked by inequities, imbalances in development, and a rural-urban divide that may be getting more pronounced as a result.

More significantly, PE-led growth can colour the entire institution of healthcare, including non-PE hospitals, in ways that may not help India meet its goals of universal health coverage. This is because the imperatives of equity, often looking for exits as they hop to more lucrative shores, turn the game towards premiumisation, tourist healthcare or complex and advanced procedures where returns can be higher, by forsaking simpler or lower cost remedies. The refrain is that a clear business orientation has taken root, coupled with some sharp practices that are being normalised in an increasingly corporatised sector. Managers in suits sit at fancier front desks to sign off on higher billing rates that make the hospitals and their exceedingly qualified set of doctors and surgeons less available to the majority of the population.

Take the example of a leading and widely respected hospital group in Mumbai that uses home glucometers to test patients' blood sugar levels twice and often thrice a day with insta-strips that cost less than Rs 30 apiece but bills these to the patients at Rs 500 per test, a markup so outrageous and unsophisticated that many insurance companies refuse to honour the expense.

In general, lived experience, anecdotal evidence, and a small but persistent voice from doctors against this new trend tell us that matters are going from bad to worse, not merely in the immediate but also in terms of a larger and longer-term loss in an altered ecosystem. Care cedes to commerce when the health system imports the language of a returns-hungry private equity, normalises newer revenue metrics (the simplest being the highly cited average revenue per occupied bed, AROB, which is growing at 3x pre-Covid levels in multi-specialty hospitals), and, in the process, redefines broad engagement (not to speak of purpose) in overly business terms.

The missing correctives

An indication of the frustration and anger at the state of affairs was a statement last year by Mohan Bhagwat, the chief of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the ideological vanguard of the BJP, that health (and education, he added) is out of reach of ordinary people. For an organisation that wields untold influence and control over the government, the remarkable silence and lack of energy in the government to look for correctives signalled that even the RSS does not matter on everyday issues of ordinary citizens, or that policy is caught in a structural bind from which it is not expedient to change course. We have probably gone too far out on the road.

The counter view that India does not have the money to invest in growing its hospital chains, or that the public sector has failed or that its rent-seeking nature means cost-effectiveness is a casualty and efficiency will be compromised, represents a limited frame that does not allow for creative or innovative solutions. These views force a fallback to solutions that are already failing the system in new ways. We can tweak the system at best, like the government did when hospitals agreed (only informally) to freeze rates till 2026 so that insurance premiums did not rise, but any temporary stop will only mean accelerated hospital inflation in the coming years. The nature of the beast and the structure of the engagement are such that there is no escape.

Given the place we have landed, the only clear way out is to turn health into a new priority, to push accelerated new public investments in the sector, to have clear and strong regulatory mandates and strict red lines. The government of Karnataka has offered some leadership in passing the Karnataka Private Medical Establishments Act, but the experience has yet to play out. The risk of a deadened bureaucracy introducing roadblocks remains high, but at the very least, it can be argued that someone is watching and will crack the whip if things go out of line. The system will also have to build trust with doctors, empower them, and set a culture where service is honoured and respected.

(The writer is a journalist and faculty member at SPJIMR; Syndicate: The Billion Press)

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

An Iran of grace

The mere mention of Iran in the media takes me back in time

SURYAKUMARI DENNISON

Iran is in the news, as it was four decades ago when I lived there with my husband. A civil engineer by profession, he was deputed by his company to work on a construction project, in the south-western city of Ahvaz. On our arrival, we were confronted with conflict.

In 1986, hostilities with Iraq were into their sixth year. Ahvaz was near the border between the warring neighbours and subject to aerial attacks. Zergan Nirougah, the power plant progressing under the supervision of my husband and his colleagues, was a prospective target.

Iraq, however, wished to avoid foreign fatalities. Thus, before every bombing mission, non-Iranian nationals would be cautioned not to venture out.

While my husband and I appreciated this consideration, it seemed unfair to the Iraqi pilots, who lacked the advantage of surprise as they flew over Ahvaz. Relatively safe indoors, we would hear the air-raid siren, warning us that danger was imminent. This would be followed by the sound of anti-aircraft guns. If there were Iraqi casualties, we knew nothing about them.

What we did see, with regrettable regularity, were funerals of Iranian soldiers. Flag-draped coffins were borne in procession, and the photographs atop them revealed that those within were heart-wrenchingly young. The wailing of black-clad mourners mingled with the chants of onlookers. *Jang, Jang ta Piruzi* (war, war till victory) was the defiant cry, which rings in our ears to this day.

Many of our Iranian friends had lost loved ones, but they were brave in bereavement. Even as they endured what the poet Wilfred Owen describes as "the pity of war", they were eager to make our stay in their country as pleasant as possible. Realising that we had never stood in queues to buy essentials, they would do so on our behalf, in the sweltering summer heat, to ensure that we did not suffer deprivation.

Understanding our urge to travel, Homayun took us to Isfahan (famously known as *Nesf-e-Jahan* or Half the World), where his relatives welcomed us warmly. We explored that beautiful city and later visited Shiraz, once home to the literary luminaries Hafez and Saadi, and Hamadan, where the great philosopher and physician Ibn Sina (Avicenna) spent his final years.

Today, the mere mention of Iran in the media takes us back in time. We remember with deep gratitude the people who showed us hospitality in that nation now in the news.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Governor's speech: A needless controversy

Apropos 'Governor's address row: CM, DCM differ in views' (Jan 27), Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar seems to be more pragmatic and progressive than Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who adheres to tradition and convention. In fact, Article 176 of the Constitution does not mandate the Governor to 'read' the speech penned by the Cabinet. It only states that he 'shall address' the joint session of the legislatures when occasions arise. The Governor cannot be expected to read what he construes against his conscience. When he feels certain words, phrases or sentences in the speech are repulsive to his conscience, he has the liberty to choose not to read them. India's Constitution is silent on the consequences of the Governor not reading the speech prepared by the government. As such, there is nothing to obstruct the deliberations on the floor of the legislatures. Against this background, the protest against the Governor during his exit was unnecessary. As Shivakumar says, it is all 'normal' and better to leave it at that.
T V Pandarinath Naidu, Kudige

Migrant workers' plight

Recently, over 9,400 migrant workers in Bengaluru were called back to their native places in Bengal for the Special Intensive Revision verification. The migrant workers, under procedural pressure, were required to meet strict deadlines, having to leave work suddenly and take advances from their employers. Some travelled for days, one worker for up to 36 hours. The short timelines mentioned in the notices left little time to arrange funds, and to make matters worse, there was no clarity on when and how the verification process would conclude. This has inconvenienced many, exposing the shortcomings of the exercise.
Jeremy Daniel R, Bengaluru

Better mobility

I refer to your editorial 'Bike taxis and the road to regulation' (Jan 27). The Karnataka High Court's decision to lift the ban on bike taxis is a welcome move. The state government must now implement a flexible framework to ensure safety and accountability for commuters and drivers. Bike taxis have the potential to enhance the efficiency of the city's mobility system, and the authorities concerned must work towards this goal.
Radha Ananya, Bengaluru

For a greener Bengaluru

The recycle resolutions campaign launched by a civic group in Bengaluru is commendable. The initiative stands out for its simplicity and its focus on everyday actions. The campaign's emphasis on simple habits such as washing food containers before disposal, responsibly handing over old clothes, and clearly marking hazardous waste is practical and timely.
Merlin Alisha, Bengaluru

Our readers are welcome to email letters to: **letters@deccanherald.co.in** (only letters emailed – not handwritten – will be accepted). All letters must carry the sender's postal address and phone number.

SPEAK OUT

This is an embarrassing situation. Which leader is involved? Who's leading it (illegal sand mining)? I won't get into that. It's a big business. Big people are involved. Big people from all parties are involved.

G Parameshwara, Karnataka Home Minister

Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened.
Winston Churchill

TO BE PRECISE

IN PERSPECTIVE

The paradox of Modi's new 'boss'

With power centralised in the Modi-Shah duo, Nitin Nabin has his work cut out as the BJP president

NILANJAN MUKHOPADHYAY

In his January 20 speech at the politically choreographed function in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) headquarters in New Delhi, where Nitin Nabin succeeded J P Nadda as the party's 12th president, Prime Minister Narendra Modi either forgot or was unaware of this William Shakespeare quote: "We cannot all be masters, nor all masters cannot be truly followed." (*Othello*, Scene 1, Act 1). The bard's words capture an enduring truth: not everyone is meant to lead.

Few would have believed Modi when he declared that he was merely an ordinary worker of the BJP and Nabin his boss. Not just because of his attributes, but also due to his temperament, Modi has little time for anyone who tries to match up to him even as an equal. From his school days, Modi saw none but himself as the 'leader', or in today's politics, the 'boss'. The assertion was required, if only to ensure that when the new appointee speaks for Modi (or for the other half of the BJP's power-duo, Union Home Minister Amit Shah), party leaders take him and his directives seriously.

That Modi felt compelled to make this point was more than confirmation of a widely shared view within the political class: Nabin is, to date, the most diminished leader to occupy the chair of BJP president. From that perspective, his biggest challenge will be to uphold the dignity of an office once held by stalwarts like Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani. The problem, however, is that no previous president, other than Nadda, had to contend with the Modi-Shah duo overshadowing the presidential office. This makes Nabin's task tougher – even insurmountable.

Nabin's 'selection' came in mid-December with his appointment as the working president, after protracted – though never publicly acknowledged – discord between Modi and the leadership of the BJP's ideological fountainhead, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). With this startling appointment, Modi provided Mohan Bhagwat and his colleagues a face-saving device by picking someone from within the *parivar*, albeit a dynast, while ensuring that Modi remained functionally autonomous in the larger scheme of things.

Unambiguously, Modi has conveyed the message that the party, too, shall be managed as per his diktats and not by consultation with the Nagpur-based leadership.

In the run-up to the 2014 parliamentary polls, one of Modi's glorified attributes was the creation of the 'Gujarat Model'. People rooted for it without fully comprehending what this meant and how it would play out in practice. Modi explained that he believed in a 'single-window style of functioning'. It was never stated that this window opened solely from inside the chief minister's office. The same model moved seamlessly to the Centre. It was also applicable for state governments run by the BJP and its allies, especially after Shah's term was over and Nadda moved into the position.

New order or mere optics?

There will be little change in the working relationship between the party organisation and the government (read: Modi). Nabin, like his predecessor, will likely receive 'help' from Shah, who will convey decisions to be taken. Will Nabin then be little more than a custodian of a position without power? The answer lies in the public image of the party president during Nadda's tenure. At no point was Nadda publicly belittled, nor did Modi or Shah make announcements or appointments that were the party president's brief. After all, the party was theirs too, if not his alone.

But Nabin is not even on par with Nadda. He has, after all, been catapulted from a crowded political alley in Patna, where the BJP has grown in presence, influence, and clout in recent years. Nabin's appointment heralds a generational shift within the BJP. It is a paradox in the era of senior and veteran leaders, who play musical chairs while the captain remains seated. Many of those once speculated as Nadda's replacement will now be pushed further to the margins, left beholden to whatever responsibilities are doled out to them.

These sidelined leaders, uncertain about the impact of Nabin's rise on their own careers, may find hope in his statement at the 'anointment' ceremony. The new BJP president spoke of the BJP's 'watchtower' as being extremely discerning – closely tracking leaders and workers at all levels, and elevating the meritorious to new positions.

The question, however, is whether these positions – sometimes offered to those least expecting them – will carry any real power. Given the party's trajectory since 2014, it is only fair to await Nabin's early run before passing a verdict.

(The writer is a journalist and author of Narendra Modi: The Man, The Times *and* The RSS: Icons of the Indian Right)

'Study of grammar does not support the claim that Kannada came from Tamil'

Andrew Ollett, scholar in Sanskrit, Prakrit, Pali, Apabhramsha, Kannada and Chinese, was in Bengaluru recently to receive the Infosys Prize for Humanities and Social Sciences for 2025. He teaches at the University of Chicago and is now working with Sarah Pierce Taylor on a new translation of Kavirajamarga, *the 9th century Kannada treatise on poetics. Excerpts from an interview:*

Andrew Ollett,
associate professor at the University of Chicago, in conversation with
S R Ramakrishna

THE DEEP TAKE

● How did you discover Prakrit? You couldn't have heard it growing up (in the New York suburbs).
I started with Ancient Greek in college. My teacher mentioned Sanskrit forms, sparking my interest. Soon, I was studying Sanskrit—it was fascinating. My advisor, Sheldon Pollock, suggested comparing Greek literary dialects to Indian ones, like Prakrit with its lyric poetry in the *Gathasaptasati*. That's how I entered Prakrit.

● What led you to Kannada, which is Dravidian, unlike Prakrit, which is aligned with the north Indian languages?
I am interested in language interactions. Pollock showed Kannada's close ties to Sanskrit, despite its being Dravidian. Early Kannada works engage with texts like Jinasena's *Adipurana* and Dandin's *Kavyadarsha*. After my PhD, I studied Kannada to explore regional-transregional negotiations.

● How did you learn Kannada? Your university has a South Asian studies tradition.
I couldn't take formal classes then. During a Harvard fellowship, I self-taught and joined reading groups on texts like *Pampa Bharata* and *Karnataka Panchatantra*. No formal training, which I regret. At University of Chicago, where I work, we honour A K Ramanujan's legacy, though Kannada isn't taught regularly now.

● Congratulations on the Infosys Prize. What are your impressions of Bengaluru?
I like it—it is charming. I have come for manuscripts or talks, often on the way to Mysuru.

● Your work focuses on pre-modern Kannada and Indian literature, and you have been working on *Kavirajamarga* and *Alankara Dappana*...
My recent book is an edition and translation of *Alankara Dappana*, closely related to Bhamaha's Sanskrit *Kavyalankara*. I argue *Alankara Dappana* predates Bhamaha (pre-700 CE), perhaps 500-550 CE, making it earlier than *Kavirajamarga*.

● Was *Kavirajamarga* inspired by it? What are the similarities and differences?
I will call *Kavirajamarga*'s author Sri Vijaya. He closely read Dandin and Bhamaha but not evidently *Alankara Dappana*. He adapts Sanskrit topics radically. For example, Dandin treats meaning ornaments (*arthalankaras*) first, then sound (*shabdalankaras*). Sri Vijaya reverses this, prioritising *shabda* as fundamental. He notes that faults in Sanskrit, like improper verse stops, are virtues in Kannada.

Scan to watch the video

● So Kannada evolved its poetics in conversation with Sanskrit and Prakrit. How do you view this journey, which continues to this day? Our broadsheets are Sanskritic and formal while our tabloids lean towards more informal, spoken Kannada?
In *Kavirajamarga*, there's "calibration" of Sanskrit use in Kannada—it is an obsession. It has rules on compounding and using certain Sanskrit words. Terms like *samasamskritam* evolve into *tatsama* and *tadbhava* in later grammars. This Sanskrit-Kannada negotiation persists.

● About Prakrit: how do you explain the paradox of literature being written extensively in a language that isn't spoken?
I'm not sure I have understood it, despite having worked on it for a long time... By 3rd-4th CE, Sanskrit was being used for certain genres (e.g., Buddhist north Indian texts), Prakrit for Jaina commentaries, lyric poetry. Both were trans-regional; Sanskrit spread wider.

● What are the insights you have gained from translating *Kavirajamarga*?
It is a deep text, and it requires knowing Bhamaha and Dandin intimately. Sri Vijaya is inverting them, subverting them, doing his own thing, commenting upon them. And I have also learnt the history... My introduction to Kannada scholarship has been through the scholarship on *Kavirajamarga* and that has been enlightening and enriching. To get to know the works of people like T V Venkatachala Sastri has been amazing.

● Recently, there was a furore when the well-known film star Kamal Haasan said Kannada came out of Tamil...
I follow Bhadriraju Krishnamurti, one of the great scholars of comparative Dravidian linguistics. Family trees are insufficient representations, they are simplifications of the relationships between languages, but in the Dravidian family tree we have North Dravidian and then several branches of South Dravidian languages. And then in the South Dravidian languages, we have Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada. And other languages, Kodava and so on. So on that model, they are clearly sisters. But again, that is a simplified representation of how languages have developed over time and their relations to each other. I think that from a linguistic point of view, there are features of Kannada grammar that you can't explain by positing that Tamil was the language from which it developed.

Read the full interview @ deccanherald.com

A combat veteran, Zhang Youxia was once seen as the most trusted man in Xi Jinping's military. Now he has been accused of disloyalty to Xi

CHRIS BUCKLEY

China's leader, Xi Jinping, General Zhang (right) and other officials touring an old revolutionary base in 2024. Zhang's downfall is of a different magnitude compared to the other generals who have been toppled, given his long-time, close association with Xi. NYT

In Xi's China, even the mightiest general can fall

When Gen Zhang Youxia met with US officials in Beijing in 2024, he exuded the confidence of a man who was seen as the most trusted deputy in the military of China's top leader, Xi Jinping.

Zhang did not appear worried that he had to look over his shoulder to make sure he was pleasing the leader, said Jake Sullivan, who was the US national security adviser attending the meeting, which lasted at least an hour. "He spoke in an unvarnished way that was typical of a military guy, but also reflective of someone who didn't feel like he had to be cautious."

That image of Zhang's invulnerability, and closeness to Xi, shattered over the weekend, when China's defence ministry announced that he was under investigation for unspecified breaches of laws and political discipline. Zhang's downfall is of a different magnitude from the dozens of other generals who have been toppled in Xi's unrelenting campaign against perceived corruption and disloyalty over the past three years. His fate has astonished even longtime experts who thought that they had taken full measure of Xi, China's most powerful and imperious leader in generations.

"It's fair to say this is a seismic event," Sullivan said. For Xi to "take out somebody who he had such a long history with is striking and raises a lot of questions," he said.

At 75, Zhang was old enough that Xi could in theory have ushered him into retirement. Instead, Xi made a public pariah of him. An editorial about Zhang in the Liberation Army Daily on Sunday hinted that he was being accused of corruption, and, perhaps more important, of disloyalty to Xi.

Zhang and another commander who fell with him, Gen Liu Zhenli, had "trampled on" the authority of the military chair—that is, Xi—and had "severely undermined the party's absolute leadership over the military," the editorial said. Their actions had "rendered massive damage" on the military's political soundness and combat readiness, it said.

"It reads more to suggest that they really were challenging Xi Jinping, that it was really a personal betrayal," said Shanshan Mei, a political scientist at Rand Corp, a research organisation, who studies China's military. "Corruption is mentioned, but to me this gist of what they are accused of is very political, betraying Xi."

What prompted Xi to finally turn against Zhang is now a topic of fevered speculation in Beijing and beyond. Some experts believe that Xi may have come to see Zhang as too powerful after the general's own rivals were toppled in previous purges. Others believe Xi concluded that systemic corruption was so deep that he needed drastic surgery to clear the way for a new generation of commanders. Other allegations have emerged. The Wall Street Journal reported on Sunday, citing anonymous sources, that Zhang has been accused of leaking nuclear secrets to the United States.

The timing of the investigation has drawn attention to Zhang's recent high-level engagements. Sullivan said their discussions of nuclear issues in 2024—in the presence of about 20 other Chinese military officers—were strictly general. He said that he brought up nuclear weapons in the context of China's overall military buildup, but said that Zhang said nothing sensitive or even substantive on the topic. "That was not one of the main topics of the discussion," Sullivan said.

A 'princeling' like Xi

Xi and Zhang are both "princelings," the sons of revolutionaries who served under Mao Zedong. Zhang's father was a general who served alongside Xi's father, Xi Zhongxun, in northwest China. There is no evidence that Zhang and Xi were close as children, but their shared background might have helped to cement their bond at some point, said Joseph Torigian, the author of a biography of the older Xi.

Zhang was a celebrated war veteran in a nation where few active commanders have endured real combat. Xi kept him in office past retirement, and made him his top vice chair of the Central Military Commission—Xi's eyes and ears in running the People's Liberation Army's forces day to day.

Now, if formal charges are levelled against Zhang, he may face a secret trial in the military justice system. If so, he is almost certain to be convicted and imprisoned.

Zhang's downfall "will ultimately have a big effect on the power elite in Beijing because it removes one of their safety boundaries," said Deng Yuwen, a former editor of a Chinese Communist Party newspaper in Beijing who now lives in the United States. "Even Zhang Youxia's personal relationship with Xi Jinping was no guarantee of his safety, so nobody can feel safe."

After Xi became China's leader in 2012, he quickly moved to shake up the military, which was rife with corruption and organisationally stuck in the past, ill equipped to deal with the country's expanding naval, air and nuclear weapons ambitions. Zhang was one of the commanders tapped by Xi to help lead his overhaul of the People's Liberation Army, or PLA, culminating in a major reorganisation from 2015.

"Zhang was a key enabler of Xi's military reform agenda prior to late-2015—before Xi became powerful enough to impose himself on the PLA," said James Char, an assistant professor at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore who studies the Chinese military.

In 2012, Zhang, who was then the head of a military region in northeast China, joined a delegation of senior Chinese military officers who visited the United States. Drew Thompson, then a Pentagon official helping to organise the visit, said the general was strikingly confident and inquisitive.

Other Chinese officers "stood up faster and straighter when he entered a room," Thompson said in a post on Substack on Monday. He added: "He wasn't afraid to talk to foreigners, unlike some other senior officers who were often afraid or unable to engage." Later that year, he was promoted to head the Chinese military's armaments department, an office that bought weapons, a post he held until 2017.

The department had the makings of "a petri dish of corruption for all the obvious reasons: Developing and procuring expensive weapons systems makes it a nice place to collect bribes and kickbacks," said Daniel Mattingly, a professor at Yale University who is studying Chinese military politics.

Other senior officers who worked in the department were later felled in anti-corruption investigations. Yet Zhang had long seemed to be spared scrutiny.

Now, the purge of Zhang could raise questions about China's strategy toward Taiwan and the risks of war. Thompson, the former Pentagon official, saw the general as someone who "had seen combat and been humbled by it."

"I think he could assess US and Taiwan military capabilities objectively and explain to Xi Jinping what the military risks and costs of an operation to take Taiwan would be," Thompson wrote of Zhang. "I worry about the consequences of someone other than Zhang Youxia providing Xi Jinping with military advice."

The New York Times

A seer's will of legacy

MANU KULKARNI

We have seen innumerable confluences of law and literature. Justice Bopanna (former judge of the Supreme Court, renowned for his subtle wit) humorously quipped that for lawyers, a modified version of "where there is a will, there is a way" applies — where there is a will, there is litigation. But rarely have we seen a will metamorphosing into literature.

Siddheshwar Swamiji's will, perhaps for the first time anywhere in the world, deserves the epithet of literature. Its unique title – 'The Final Salutation' – is a herald to what is to follow.

In a two-page will peppered with 24 short, poignant sentences and four neat sections, Swamiji delivers his parting message and instructions. In Section A, he explains what life, *Sadhana*, *Dharma* and the path to universal peace and happiness are. Section B expresses Swamiji's reflections on his life and his gratitude to those who enriched his sojourn. Section C is Swamiji's soliloquy of a man witnessing his own life fading, and in Section D he issues express instructions on how to deal with his mortal remains.

Section A of the will is Swamiji's message – a crystallisation of years of penance:

"1. Life is a flood of experiences;

2. Life's richness stems from constant reflection about the world and an incessant quest for truth; life's beauty is enriched by a life free from unending desires and hatred and by boundless affection for one and all;

3. All that makes such an enriching life possible is *Sadhana*;

4. Sharing useful experiences of such a life with the interested is *Dharma*.

Such a life brings peace to one and all."

In the autobiographical Section B, Swamiji describes his journey — a life that is placid, spontaneous, and without needless impulsiveness. He pays homage to his *guru*, saints, well-wishers, friends, *sadhakas* and one and all, and says: "I have lived a simple, contemplative life free from impulsiveness;

The one who shaped it is Gurudeva.

The ones who further chiselled it are the revered people of the land, well-wishers, *sadhakas* and the enlightened ordinary folk...."

The will transforms into peerless literature because every word is carefully chosen. For example, Swamiji uses *Shree Samanyaru* instead of *Sarve Samanyaru* – expressing the truth he has seen: that ordinary people are endowed with *Shree*, or a prosperity or enlightened simplicity that only a seer's eyes can perceive. His ode to nature is equally breathtaking. He also expresses his gratitude to philosophers and scientists worldwide whose explorations have expanded his horizon.

Section C is Swamiji's soliloquy of a now ebbing life. He says, "Life is dwindling like a flame burning out, a wave receding and a cloud pouring, and what remains is only vast openness, absolute silence and the truth of *shoonya*!" and that this final salutation is penned to pay tribute to this wonderful world and the peoples and things that helped Swamiji understand and experience the richness of life.

He then proceeds to give precise instructions on how the body is to be dealt with – that it shall be cremated instead of buried; funeral rites are unnecessary; ashes are to be dispersed in a river/sea; and finally, that no monument or memorial shall be built. When Swamiji says funeral rites are unnecessary (rather than an injunction not to, unlike his other instructions), one is left wondering about the understated message – of a life that has attained the ultimate realisation of *shoonya* needing no more earthly prodding!

Swamiji ensures that the will is attested by two judges so that no questions will be asked posthumously about his will's validity – exemplifying how he seamlessly transformed from a seer who politely and graciously declined honours and awards to being adept at the ways of the world. The will is unconventional in more ways than one and therefore had to be legally ironclad.

In the penultimate paragraph, Swamiji quotes the 12th-century seer Allama Prabhu's *vachana* – about the dissolution of truth, falsehood, identity and existence itself into an infinite openness or void – at once conveying both Swamiji's understanding of the spiritual ideal and his tribute to the *vachanakara* who perhaps influenced him the most.

Swamiji's conclusion with the salutation in Sanskrit conveys Swamiji's love and gratitude to another language that he was a master of – yet another lesson to us in these divisive days. It is one of those rare or first-of-its-kind wills that leaves behind no property but a very rich legacy.

(The writer is an advocate practising in the Karnataka High Court)

OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

50 YEARS AGO: JANUARY 1976

Parliament abolishes bonded labour

New Delhi, Jan 27
The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Bill today secured the approval of Parliament with the Lok Sabha unanimously passing it. Labour Minister K. V. Raghunatha Reddy said a comprehensive survey would be undertaken by the state governments and the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Tribes to identify the areas where the system still existed. The enactment of the Bill, he said, would generate awareness among the socially-conscious section of the intelligentsia.

25 YEARS AGO: JANUARY 2001

16,000 feared dead in Gujarat earthquake

Ahmedabad, Jan 27
Nearly 16,000 people may have died in yesterday's devastating earthquake in Gujarat where massive rescue and relief operations were underway to cope with the disaster that has wiped out villages and rendered lakhs homeless. Official sources in Bhuj, which bore the brunt of the quake, said that the death toll in Kutch district alone could be around 15,000. BJP leader Narendra Modi, who visited the ravaged district, said the number of dead in the state could cross 17,000.

OASIS | DOROTHY VICTOR

A simple vision for the New Year

We have begun yet another New Year, 2026. As we step into this fresh chapter, I carry within me, like countless others across this nation, a simple vision for our society.

I yearn for a society where safety is paramount. Given the increasing crime rate in our contemporary society, safety should not be a privilege for a few. Rather may safety be a guarantee, especially for women, children and elderly who are vulnerable.

I envision a year that will open its doors to more job opportunities, enabling people not merely to survive but to thrive. With these opportunities, I hope we take firm steps toward reducing poverty, ensuring that fewer lives are defined by scarcity and more by possibility.

I hope for a civil administration that is efficient, transparent, and compassionate. May our judicial system too, be fair to everyone, fostering trust between citizens and the institutions meant to protect them.

I dream of good roads, clean air, purified drinking water, open parks, green spaces, recreation clubs, and community centres that will uplift the mind and offer rest to the weary and the poor at no extra cost. May we also be guided to curb waste, protect our environment, and care for it by adopting mindful life styles.

I trust that the two most fundamental rights of education and health-care reach every child of our society. No child should grow up illiterate because his/her parents lacked resources, and no life should fade away for want of medical care. Let higher education and holistic living become accessible to every eager and determined person, regardless of background or wealth.

May we create a society where the poor are not worlds apart from the rich in their ability to lead lives of dignity, contentment, and hope. Can we take some steps toward creating such a society?

As a New Year begins, I think, we can. A society is never meant to remain static. It ought to shed its old layers, outgrow its limitations, and rise anew if it is to serve its people more fully and justly. Individually and collectively, we can "be the change we want to see." We can become that society about which Tagore wrote, "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high... let my country awake."

‘Unless action hurts accused, it won’t work’: SC on acid attacks

Court suggests auctioning assets of accused to provide relief to victim

STERN STEPS

- SC seeks year-wise data on acid attack cases
- Suggests attaching assets of accused to compensate victims
- Court calls acid attacks as serious as dowry deaths
- Slams reformative theory in such crimes

ASHISH TRIPATHI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed all states and Union Territories to provide detailed information, including year-wise data on acid attack cases, their status in courts, and the rehabilitation measures to support the victims.

A bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices R Mahadevan and Joymalya Bagchi stressed the need for a harsher approach in dealing with acid attack cases, saying that reformative theory has no place in such crimes. The court felt that if an accused cannot pay compensation, their assets should be attached and auctioned to ensure relief for the victim.

A plea was filed by Shaheen Malik, an acid attack survivor, seeking an expansion of the legal definition of disability to ensure that victims who suffer life-threatening damage to internal organs due to forced ingestion of acid receive adequate compensation and relief, including medical care.

Emphasising that extraordinary punitive measures are needed beyond the letter of the law, the bench observed, “If the accused cannot pay compensation, why not attach all assets and auction them to provide relief to the victim?”

“Unless the action is painful for the accused, it will not work,” the bench said, adding that a different approach must be adopted since reformative theory has no place in such crimes.

“One should be extremely harsh—the system, the court, and the police,” the SC added.

Recounting her ordeal, Malik said, “I lost my identity, underwent 25 surgeries, and each visit to the operation theatre was extremely painful. At least I can see with one eye, but many women have become blind after acid attacks. There is no rehabilitation policy for them.”

The court sought year-wise information on reported incidents of acid attacks, along with details on whether chargesheets were filed in those cases.

“How many cases have been decided, and how many remain pending at the trial stage,” the bench asked.

It also sought data on the number of appeals filed in appellate courts, including the high courts, in such cases.

Gujarat man who fled Nepal jail during ‘Gen Z protest’ held

AHMEDABAD, DHNS: The city police on Tuesday detained a person who had allegedly escaped from Nepal prison during the ‘Gen Z protest’ in September last year.

The special operation group (SOG) of Ahmedabad Detection of Crime Branch caught Dharmesh Chunara, a resident of Ahmedabad, who was lodged in Nepal prison in connection with a narcotics case.

SOG officials said that the Nepal government had shared a list of Indians who were lodged in the Bhadra jail in Kathmandu in different criminal cases and escaped during the large-scale protest in September last year.

The list was circulated by Sashatra Seema Bal (SSB) among the state police. However, it didn’t have Chunara’s full name and complete address. SOG said that based on human intelligence and technical analysis, they identified Chunara and apprehended him.

Police said that Chunara had been caught in Kathmandu with 13 kg of hybrid ganja worth about Rs 13 crore. He was travelling from Bangkok.

Chunara has allegedly admitted that he escaped from Bhadra jail during the unrest and entered India via the Sonauli border in Uttar Pradesh.

Officials said that he would be deported as per the procedure.

SC rejects plea against ‘VIP darshan’ at Ujjain temple

NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to entertain a plea for issuing a direction to provide equal opportunity for ‘Darshan’ and performing rituals to all devotees in the Garbhagriha (sanctum sanctorum) at Ujjain’s Shri Mahakaleshwar temple without any discrimination between common people and VIPs.

A bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices R Mahadevan and Joymalya Bagchi said that it was for the temple administration to decide such issues.

“They are not shraddhalu (devotees). We don’t want to comment further on this. These people go for different purposes. What should be or not be is not for the court to decide. We are about judicability,” the bench said.

The court, however, granted the petitioner, Darpan Awasthi, liberty to approach the concerned authorities with his request. “The people who file such petitions are not genuine devotees, and courts are not supposed to decide guidelines or polices with respect to such subjects,” the bench said.

Upon hearing advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain for the petitioner, the court refused to consider the plea. Jain submitted that there should be a uniform policy on who is to be allowed inside the Garbhagriha.

“There is a violation of Article 14 of the Constitution. There should be a uniform policy of equal treatment. Citizens cannot be discriminated or differentiated on the basis of VIP status. If a person is entering a garbhagriha, it is because of the recommendation of the Collector. Any devotee should have the right to enter the garbhagriha and offer ‘jal’ to the deity,” he submitted.

The bench, however, said, “Let those who are at the helm of affairs take a decision.”

Awasthi challenged the August 2025 judgment of the MP High Court, which had rejected his plea.

MP shocker: Republic Day feast served to schoolchildren on scraps of paper

MAIHAR (MP), PTI: In a shocking incident, students of a government school in Madhya Pradesh’s Maihar district were served the special Republic Day mid-day meal on scraps of waste paper and torn pages from old notebooks, instead of plates.

After video clips of the incident went viral, the district administration has ordered action, officials said on Tuesday.

The video shows students sitting on the floor and eating halwa-puri served to them on torn pages from old notebooks and books. The incident occurred at the Government High School in Bhatigwan.

Taking cognisance, Public Relations Officer for Satna and Maihar, Rajesh Singh, said strict action has been initiated.

Based on the investigation report received from District Project Coordinator (DPC) Vishnu Tripathi, a proposal for suspending the in-charge Principal of the Government High School, Sunil Kumar Tripathi, has been forwarded to the Commissioner, Rewa.

Additionally, the salary of a contract employee has been deducted for one month.

Singh said the Maihar collector has issued a show-cause notice to the District Panchayat’s Midday Meal Branch in-charge and DPC Tripathi for negligence.

The incident evoked a sharp reaction from the opposition Congress party.

Former Women’s Commission member and Madhya Pradesh Congress spokesman Sangeeta Sharma slammed the BJP government.

“This is the bitter truth of the midday meal that children were served food on scrap paper in the Maihar district.

“Is this your good governance and sensitive government?” Sharma stated on X while targeting Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav.

MISCELLANY

◆ COMICS ◆

Blondie

WE'D LIKE SOME SCARY DISHES FOR OUR HALLOWEEN HORROR BANQUET!
BOO! HA! HA!
REALLY? LIKE WHAT?
FRANKENSTEIN FILET WITH HAUNTED HASH!
...AND ZOMBIE ZITI TOPPED WITH VAMPIRE VEAL!
WOW! THIS WILL BE SCARY!
THAT'S NOTHING!!
WAIT UNTIL WE PUT ON OUR COSTUMES!
10-20

Hagar The Horrible

Beetle Bailey

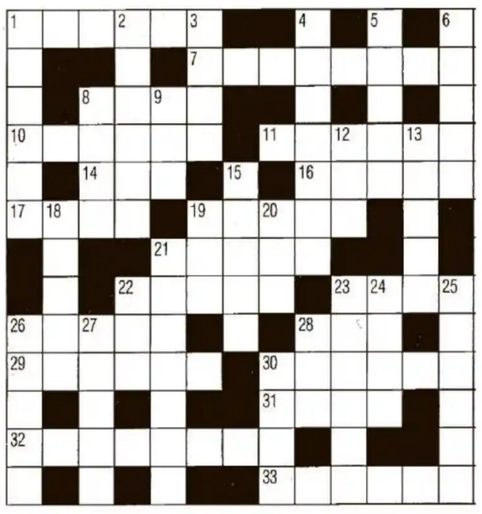
Peanuts

WHERE ARE YOU GOING, BIG BROTHER?
WELL, I FINALLY GOT UP NERVE TO CALL THAT LITTLE RED-HAIRED GIRL, BUT I DIALED MARCIE BY MISTAKE, AND GOT A DATE WITH PEPPERMINT PATTY...
I THINK YOU'RE TOO WISHY-WASHY, BIG BROTHER
IT'S NOT A LOST ART!

Marvin

HAVE YOU INTRODUCED YOURSELF TO THE NEW NEIGHBORS?
NOT FORMALLY
I LEFT A NOTE ON THEIR WINDSHIELD TELLING THEM THEY WERE PARKED IN OUR PARKING SPACE

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 12341



ACROSS
1 Cruel, vicious (6)
7 In the open air (8)
8 Be on fire (4)
10 Daft (6)
11 Outward appearance (6)
14 Gave food to (3)
16 Claw (5)
17 Strongbox (4)
19 Landed estate (5)
21 Defeated competitor (5)
22 Nun’s costume (5)
23 American ostrich (4)
26 Pigmeat (5)
28 Born as (3)
29 Newspaper boss (6)
30 Trustworthy (6)
31 Object of worship (4)
32 Partisan (3-5)
33 Boy’s name (6)

DOWN
1 Ruptures (6)
2 Hairpiece (6)
3 Touch down (4)
4 Originator (7)
5 Customary (5)
6 Twelve (5)
8 Polish (4)
9 To free (3)
12 Vehicle (3)
13 Sidestep (5)
15 Fundamental (5)
18 In front (5)
19 Angry crowd (3)
20 Mesh (3)
21 Wool fat (7)
22 Spicy (3)
23 Fame (6)
24 Foot part (4)
25 Painter (6)
26 Broom of twigs (5)
27 Alcoholic drink (5)
28 Signal agreement (3)
30 Conceal (4)

CRYPTIC

ACROSS
1 Stop to give a lift? (4,2)
7 Having departed from the house for good, was a blow (4,4)
8 A firm master with an optical defect (4)
10 Said to be fine in the use of pens (6)
11 The devil will work with striking effect (6)
14 A hat like this could belong to a Roman Catholic (3)
16 Father of uniform sons (5)
17 Loud sound of explosion in central Harrow (4)
19 Substitute fieldsman? (5)
21 Trimmed in twos, we’re told (5)
22 Revolutionary – or master traitor? (5)
23 Mum’s joining the Turk’s Head staff (4)
26 Less than severely cut (5)
28 He gets it wrong a lot (3)
29 Bound to be capable of effortless carpentry (6)
30 It’s full of interest when mum’s out of service (6)
31 A significant movie? (4)
32 Picks up, one gathers (8)
33 He had little to eat and might have been poisoned (6)

DOWN
1 Officer having to whistle for his money? (6)
2 One beautifully suitable in a new role? (6)
3 Prepare to move up in final position (4)
4 Made an impressive show of petulance? (7)
5 The wanderer Damon turned up (5)
6 Fish or steak minced (5)
8 The decorator’s daughter? (4)
9 In short, the sunny area familiar to travellers (3)
12 Standard piece of apparatus (3)
13 Get over being peevish (5)
15 Just a bad molar (5)
18 Some red roses returned, direct (5)
19 A vehicle for French? (3)
20 Could one help a sick dog to a few pieces of meat? (3)
21 On the quiet, bent on getting a drink? (7)
22 The chaps point to me (3)
23 Being tight, they miss out half the beer (6)
24 A concluding article on humanity (4)
25 A warning cry of strange timbre (6)
26 They help one to see the little bits mentioned (5)
27 Jump downstairs? (5)
28 A minor corporation? (3)
30 The majority have a moist exterior (4)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 12340

CRYPTIC
ACROSS: 1, Share 6, S-IX-ty 9, I-Ron out 10, SN-ide 11, Screw 12, Ra-L-ph 13, Mislaid 15, Mil 17, Ante 18, Scrape 19, FA-ult. 20, So-R-rel 22, Safe 24, Elk 25, Snowman 26, Pilot 27, Ibs-e-n 28, Bound 29, Newsman 30, Ly-on-s 31, As-I’d-E.
DOWN: 2, Hand in 3, Riddle 4, Ere 5, K-nead 6, Suspect 7, It-Ch. 8, The pip 12, Riv-al 13, Masse 14, S-to-rk 15, Madam 16, L-even 18, S-L-ant 19, Fel-in-es 21, Old boy 22, Swoons 23, Fan-Ned 25, So-use 26, Penn 28, BA-a.

EASY
ACROSS: 1, Stabs 6, Barge 9, Ottoman 10, Tipsy 11, Straw 12, Sense 13, Attempt 15, Sic 17, Uses 18, Cornea 19, Rayon 20, Ulster 22, Area 24, Rue 25, Protest 26, Fault 27, Steal 28, Rival 29, Slither 30, Beats 31, Dense.
DOWN: 2, Twists 3, Bosses 4, Sty 5, Comet 6, Bassoon 7, Ante 8, Goalie 12, Spear 13, Augur 14, Terse 15, Snare 16, Carat 18, Court 19, Recalls 21, Lustre 22, Attire 23, Essays 25, Plate 26, Fast 28, Red.

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

LIYMF

AYNHD

BTAEED

CUGOHR

Make sure you pack plenty of water.
We've taken every precaution.
7/19
WITH ELEVATIONS OVER 4,000 FEET, THE GOBI DESERT IS NOT A PLACE TO GET ---

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Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday’s Jumbles: UNCUT MINUS INFUSE PRANCE
Answer: The original version of her cookbook was a — “MENUSCRIPT”

◆SU-DO-KU-6815◆

	9					6	3	
5								2
			9			5		7
	6		2					8
4		8	7		6	9		5
2					1		6	
9		1			3			
6								3
	3	2					5	

hard

SOLUTION TO 6814

6	1	4	3	5	9	7	2	8
3	5	2	7	8	1	4	6	9
7	9	8	6	2	4	3	5	1
1	3	6	8	9	7	5	4	2
2	8	7	5	4	3	1	9	6
9	4	5	2	1	6	8	7	3
8	2	1	4	6	5	9	3	7
5	7	9	1	3	2	6	8	4
4	6	3	9	7	8	2	1	5

To solve the puzzle: To solve a su-do-ku puzzle, every digit from1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

SCRABBLE™

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L1 B3 I1 E1 A1 E1 T1 — Triple Word Score — RACK 1

R1 M3 A1 I1 E1 G2 P3 — Double Word Score — RACK 2

N1 A1 U1 O1 S1 D2 T1 — RACK 3

D2 T1 X8 U1 E1 E1 R1 — RACK 4

PAR SCORE 145-155
by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. “Blanks” used as any letter have no point value. All Judd’s words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD’S SOLUTION TOMORROW

YESTERDAY’S SOLUTION

E1 N1 C3 O1 D2 E1 R1 — RACK 1 = 66

C3 R1 I1 T1 I1 C3 S1 — RACK 2 = 61

P3 O1 L1 I1 T1 I1 C3 — RACK 3 = 72

S1 A1 M3 B3 U1 C3 A1 — RACK 4 = 89

PAR SCORE 190-200 — JUDD’S TOTAL 288

HITORI-3269

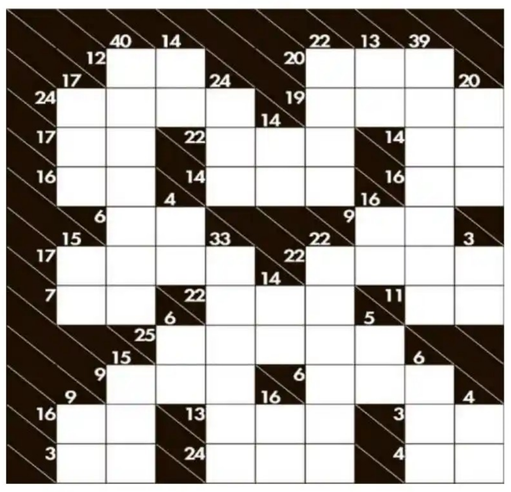
7	1	5	8	2	4	4	3
1	7	3	3	5	2	1	1
1	5	5	4	5	6	2	2
3	2	7	1	4	8	6	8
6	2	1	5	1	1	7	1
3	4	8	6	7	5	3	5
4	8	6	2	1	3	5	7
2	5	1	4	3	5	1	6

SOLUTION TO 3268

1	■	4	2	7	8	5	■
6	5	■	8	■	1	■	3
3	■	5	6	1	2	4	7
5	4	7	■	6	■	2	8
2	■	6	5	3	4	7	■
■	3	■	7	■	6	■	2
8	7	1	■	2	5	6	4
■	1	2	3	5	7	■	6

To solve the puzzle: Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

KAKURO- 3269



SOLUTION TO 3268

To solve the puzzle: Put a number from 1 through 9 in a cell. No zeros. A number in a cell separated by diagonal line tells the sum of numbers in consecutive cells at its right or downward. No number may appear more than once in consecutive cells.

SU DO KU X - 3810

■					6		5	■
8	■		5				■	
7	3	■				■		4
	7		■		■		2	
	9	2		■	5	1		
		1	6		■	3		8
		■				6		
	5				7		■	9
■		4			2			■

SOLUTION TO 3809

9	8	5	3	6	2	1	7	4
7	3	6	9	4	1	8	5	2
2	4	1	5	7	8	9	6	3
1	6	9	2	3	7	4	8	5
3	5	2	4	8	6	7	9	1
4	7	8	1	9	5	2	3	6
8	1	3	7	5	4	6	2	9
5	2	7	6	1	9	3	4	8
6	9	4	8	2	3	5	1	7

To solve the puzzle: The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

POLICY PUSHBACK: Education Minister Pradhan says safeguards will protect students

Stir grows against UGC rules; govt vows no harassment

AMRITA MADHUKALYA
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Amid growing protests over the recently notified University Grants Commission Regulations to tackle caste-based discrimination on campuses, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday gave an assurance that the government will ensure the rules are not 'misused' to harass students.

Dharmendra Pradhan

"I want to assure with all humility that there will be no harassment. No one will be permitted to misuse the rules in the name of discrimination. In the name of discrimination, nobody will have the right to misuse the regulations, the UGC, the Union government, or state governments. There will be responsibility," Pradhan said while speaking to reporters at Didwana in Rajasthan.

He said that the rules are well within the ambit of the Constitution. "This (the notification of the Rules) has been done under the supervision of the Supreme Court," he added.

The University Grants Commission (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026, which were notified by the education ministry on January 13, have led to protests in various parts of the country.

On Tuesday, over 100 students braved the rain to stage a demonstration outside the UGC headquarters in Delhi, demanding that the rules be scrapped by the higher education regulator with immediate effect. Student organisations have also been active on social media to rally support.

While the protests have been spearheaded by upper caste groups, some Left wing student unions, including the All India Students' Association (AISA), have come out in support of the UGC regulations against caste discrimination on campuses.

The rules mandate the formation of 'Equity Committees' in all higher education institutions to address and prevent discrimination on campuses, and college and university campuses have been asked to establish an Equal Opportunity Centre to oversee the implementation of the policies in addition to operating an 'Equity Helpline'.

A PIL has been filed in the Supreme Court, claiming the regulations were unconstitutional as they legitimise 'reverse discrimination'.

Protests in UP; middle-level BJP leaders resign

SANJAY PANDEY
LUCKNOW, DHNS

The UGC's 'Promotion of Equity in Higher Education' Regulation 2026 triggered widespread protests by outfits like Karni Sena, Savarna Sena across Uttar Pradesh, even as several BJP leaders resigned from the party to register their protest against the same.

The outfits held marches in Jaunpur, Deoria, Mirzapur and a few other districts, raising slogans against the University Grants Commission (UGC) Regulation and warned that the agitation would be intensified if the regulation is not scrapped.

The speakers at the protest demonstrations termed the government as "anti-savarna" (anti-upper caste), lashed out against the BJP and said that it would pay a heavy price in the next Assembly polls in the state, which are due in 2027.

In Aligarh, members of the right-wing student organisation Rashtrawadi Chaatra Sangathan and Kshatriya Mahasabha blocked the cavalcade of Hathras BJP MP Anoop Pradhan at the district collectorate on Tuesday. They also burnt an effigy of the UGC, raising slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

According to reports, at least half a dozen middle-level BJP leaders resigned in protest against the UGC Regulation.

All India Hindu Sena national president Deepak Sharma wrote letters to President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying that the Regulation violated the Right to Equality and demanded its withdrawal.

Under the new UGC regulations, introduced to stop caste-based discrimination in colleges and universities, the UGC has asked institutions to set up special committees, helplines and monitoring teams to handle complaints, especially from SC, ST and OBC students.

(*With PTI inputs*)

Members of various organisations stage a protest against the new University Grants Commission regulations, in Ranchi on Tuesday. PTI

UP govt suspends officer who resigned over UGC policy

LUCKNOW, DHNS: The Uttar Pradesh government on Monday suspended Alankar Agnihotri, a senior state administrative service officer, who had earlier resigned in protest against the UGC's Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Regulations, 2026.

Agnihotri had also cited his opposition to the alleged humiliation of Hindu seer Swami Avimukteshwaranand at the Maagh Mela in Prayagraj.

The government suspended Agnihotri on charges of "administrative indiscipline" and ordered a probe into his conduct.

Agnihotri alleged that he was held "hostage" by the Bareilly district magistrate and sat on a dharna in front of the Collectorate, claiming there was a "pre-planned conspiracy" to suspend him following his resignation. He said he plans to challenge the suspension in court.

According to sources, Agnihotri, who was serving as Bareilly city magistrate, had been attached to the district magistrate's office in Shamli.

Earlier, the officer was served a notice by the district administration directing him to vacate his official accommodation immediately. He vacated the residence late at night and drove to an undisclosed location, citing a threat to his life.

Sources said efforts were made to persuade Agnihotri to withdraw his resignation, but he remained adamant. He claimed that the district magistrate held him "hostage" for several hours after receiving a call from a senior official, who allegedly referred to him as a "pagal pundit".

Bareilly District Magistrate Avinash Singh, however, rejected the allegations, stating that Agnihotri had come to meet him of his own accord and was offered tea and sweets.

Agnihotri's resignation triggered mixed reactions from political leaders and others. While BJP leaders claimed that the officer had "political ambitions", opposition parties came out in his support.

Swami Avimukteshwaranand, who later interacted with Agnihotri, reportedly offered him a "big post" in religion field.

Second UP officer resigns over seer controversy

LUCKNOW, DHNS: A day after state administrative service officer Alankar Agnihotri resigned in protest against the alleged humiliation of Swami Avimukteshwaranand and the new UGC regulations, Ayodhya GST Commissioner Prashant Kumar Singh resigned on Tuesday, expressing "anguish" over the seer's allegations against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

A video that went viral on social media purportedly showed Singh in tears while speaking to reporters as he announced his resignation.

In his resignation letter addressed to Governor Anandiben Patel, Singh said he was stepping down in support of Adityanath and in protest against Avimukteshwaranand's remarks. "The seer's remarks are against the Constitution and democracy," he said. "Swami Avimukteshwaranand has made baseless allegations against Modi and Union Minister Amit Shah," Singh added.

Singh also alleged that seer had been instigating "innocent" officials through "allurements" against state-government.

Gujarat ATS arrests youth for alleged terror plot

SATISH JHA
AHMEDABAD, DHNS

The Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) on Tuesday said it had arrested a youth from Navsari in south Gujarat for allegedly conspiring to kill a "selected group of individuals to spread terror and fear".

The ATS said it arrested Faizan Shaikh on January 25, from Charpul in Navsari district. He was allegedly radicalised by the ideologies of the terror outfits Jaish-e-Mohammed and Al Qaeda.

Shaikh, 22, who originally hails from the Rampur district of Uttar Pradesh, is accused of procuring a weapon and ammunition to carry out targeted killings.

According to the ATS, Shaikh was working as a tailor in Navsari. A pistol and six live cartridges were allegedly seized from his possession. Investigators said he had bought the revolver from an unidentified person in UP around six months ago.

"His primary motive was to identify and carry out targeted killings of those who allegedly insulted the Prophet," the ATS said.

In a release, the ATS stated that the plot involved attacking and killing certain well-known youths in UP to spread terror, and conspiring to separate Kashmir from India through jihad. "To execute this conspiracy, he had stockpiled deadly weapons," it said.

Materials seized from Shaikh's possession allegedly include a picture of the Red Fort with an Islamic flag superimposed on it, and another image containing English text that read: "Of India in Delhi, the death of all these names written is very close, and we will show you how to kill them, Inshallah."Officials also recovered chat messages with one Mohammed Abu Bakar, which allegedly contained inflammatory videos of terrorist Farhatullah Ghori, propaganda videos from the Jaish-e-Mohammed media cell, and audio files of radical speeches in Urdu.

FOILED

- According to ATS, youth conspired to kill "selected group of individuals to spread terror and fear
- He was allegedly radicalised by the ideologies of the terror outfits JeM and Al Qaeda
- Materials seized from Shaikh's possession include a picture of the Red Fort with an Islamic flag superimposed on it

Fresh legal hurdle for Vijay's 'Jana Nayagan'

CHENNAI, DHNS: Actor Vijay's cinematic swansong, *Jana Nayagan*, continues to face trouble with the Madras High Court on Tuesday setting aside the order of a single judge who directed the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) to issue a U/A 16+ certificate to the film.

TVK chief Vijay

The first division bench of Chief Justice M M Shrivastava sent the case back to the single judge, Justice P T Asha, for a fresh hearing, contending that the natural justice principles were not followed.

With the immediate release of the movie, made on a budget of a whopping Rs 500 crores, ruled out in the wake of Tuesday's judgement, the producers have two options — continue to fight it out legally or withdraw the petition and go before the CBFC's Revising Committee to get clearance.

There is also a question mark on whether the movie can be released once the Model Code of Conduct comes into force in Tamil Nadu, as *Jana Nayagan* was made to give the elevation that Vijay needs before his political debut in the April-May Assembly elections. The movie is said to contain numerous politically-loaded dialogues and serve as campaign material for Vijay's TVK. Its release, once the election dates are announced, is doubtful.

On January 9, Justice Asha asked the CBFC to issue a U/A 16+ certificate to *Jana Nayagan.*

China, Russia to bolster strategic military ties

Developments in Venezuela and Iran spur closer coordination

BEIJING, AFP

China's Defence Minister Dong Jun told his Russian counterpart that the two countries should "strengthen strategic coordination" during a video call on Tuesday, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

The call came days after negotiators from Russia and Ukraine met to discuss a US-brokered plan to end the war -- nearly four years after Moscow's invasion -- which Western governments accuse Beijing of enabling.

"China is willing to work with Russia to ... strengthen strategic coordination, enrich the substance of cooperation, improve exchange mechanisms," Dong told his Russian counterpart Andrey Belousov, according to CCTV.

Dong also said the two countries should "jointly enhance the ability to respond to various risks and challenges and join hands to inject positive energy into global security and stability".

There was no mention of the Ukraine conflict in the readout reported by CCTV or in a statement from Russia's defence ministry.

"Since our last meeting in June of last year, many events have occurred that have significantly affected the international situation," Belousov was quoted as saying in the statement.

SHARED CONCERNS

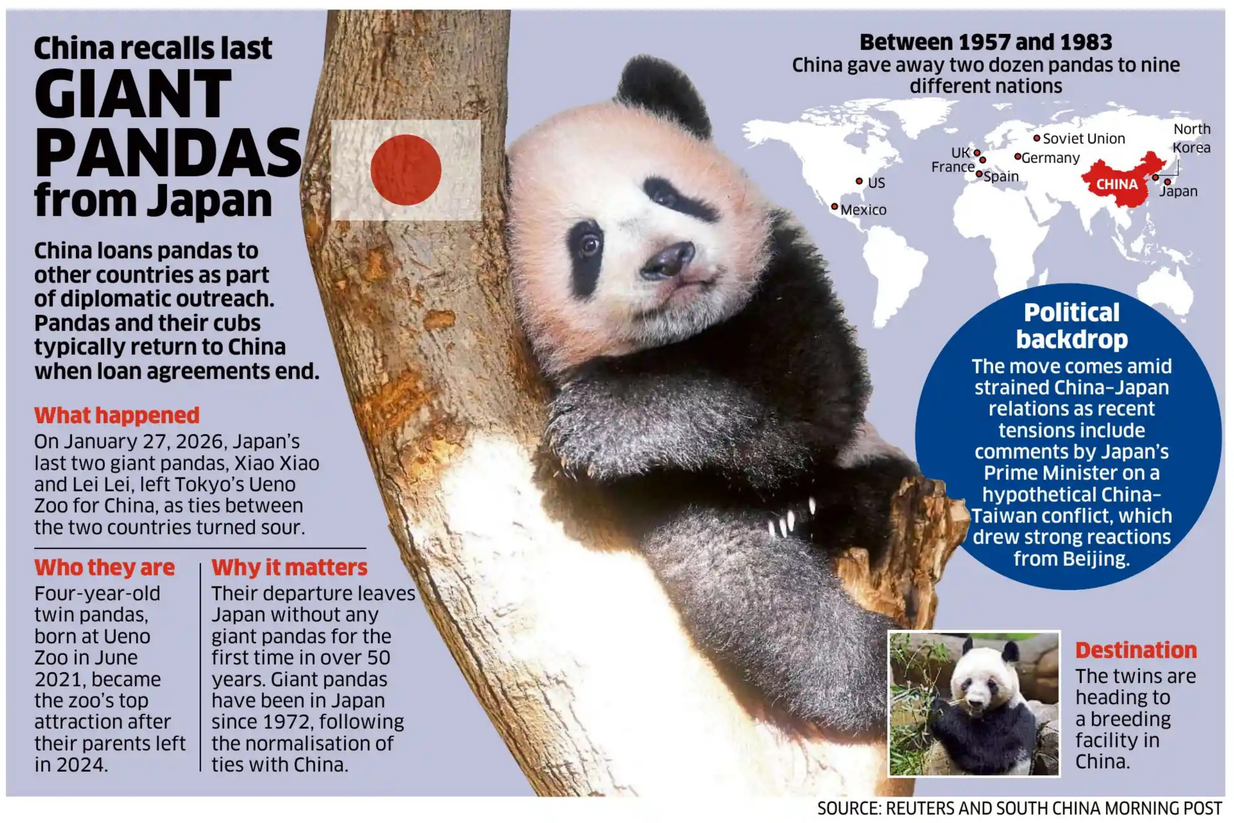
- Russian Defence Minister Andrey Belousov said recent global developments had significantly altered the international situation, citing cases such as Venezuela and Iran as requiring closer security analysis and coordination.

"The examples of Venezuela and Iran require our agencies to continuously analyse the security situation and take appropriate action," he added.

Belousov also said the meeting would "further strengthen our bilateral strategic partnership".

China and Russia are close partners, and while Beijing has said it takes a neutral stance on the war in Ukraine, it has never condemned the invasion.

Western governments accuse Beijing of providing Russia with crucial economic support for its war effort, notably by supplying military components for its defence industry.


China recalls last
GIANT PANDAS from Japan
China loans pandas to other countries as part of diplomatic outreach. Pandas and their cubs typically return to China when loan agreements end.
What happened
On January 27, 2026, Japan's last two giant pandas, Xiao Xiao and Lei Lei, left Tokyo's Ueno Zoo for China, as ties between the two countries turned sour.
Who they are
Four-year-old twin pandas, born at Ueno Zoo in June 2021, became the zoo's top attraction after their parents left in 2024.
Why it matters
Their departure leaves Japan without any giant pandas for the first time in over 50 years. Giant pandas have been in Japan since 1972, following the normalisation of ties with China.
Between 1957 and 1983
China gave away two dozen pandas to nine different nations
North Korea
Soviet Union
UK
France
Germany
Spain
US
Mexico
CHINA
Japan
Political backdrop
The move comes amid strained China-Japan relations as recent tensions include comments by Japan's Prime Minister on a hypothetical China-Taiwan conflict, which drew strong reactions from Beijing.
Destination
The twins are heading to a breeding facility in China.
SOURCE: REUTERS AND SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST

US ICE agents to have security role at Winter Olympics in Italy

Decision sparks criticism from Italian politicians

ROME, REUTERS

US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) personnel will help protect US delegations at the Winter Olympics in Italy, a US embassy source said on Tuesday, confirming local media reports and prompting anger among some Italian politicians.

ICE and Border Patrol agents have faced heavy criticism in the US over their enforcement of President Trump's immigration crackdown, after two US citizens were shot dead in separate incidents this month in Minnesota.

The embassy source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said ICE's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) division would back up the US State Department's security service at the February 6–22 Milano-Cortina Winter Olympics.

The HSI agents will not carry out any immigration enforcement activity in Italy but will focus on "mitigating risks from transnational criminal organisations," the source said, without elaborating. "All security operations remain under Italian authority," the source added.

HSI has been present at major sporting events in both the US and abroad, including the Super Bowl and Olympic Games, as part of international partnerships related to human trafficking and drug trafficking, one former official said. While HSI's mission is to focus on transnational crime, many agents in the US have also supported routine immigration enforcement.

The US embassy source said HSI was also present at the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.

Some Italian politicians, including the leader of a party in Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's right-wing coalition, have criticised ICE's involvement.

"It seems sheer idiocy to me," Maurizio Lupi, leader of the Noi Moderati party in Meloni's coalition, told la Repubblica, while recognising that Italian law enforcement may need to coordinate with foreign counterparts.

The left-leaning mayor of Milan, one of the co-host cities, called ICE "a militia that kills."

India slams Pak's use of terror as state policy

UNITED NATIONS, PTI: In a strongly-worded retort in the UNSC, India said it is not normal to tolerate Pakistan's continued use of terrorism as an instrument of state policy, as New Delhi hit back at Islamabad's envoy for advancing a "false and self-serving" account of Operation Sindoor.

India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish, delivered a sharp response to comments made by Pakistan's Ambassador to the UN, Asim Iftikhar Ahmad. Ahmad spoke about Operation Sindoor, J&K and the Indus Waters Treaty at the UNSC debate on 'Reaffirming International Rule of Law'. Harish said Pakistan has a single-point agenda — to harm India and its people.

WORLD AT A GLANCE

Temple dedicated to Lord Ram's sons opens in Pakistan

▸ The Loh Temple, dedicated to one of Lord Ram's sons and located within the historical Lahore Fort in Pakistan's Punjab province, has been fully restored and opened to the public, PTI reports from Lahore.

The Walled City Lahore Authority (WCLA) said on Tuesday that it had completed the conservation of the Loh Temple along with two other monuments – the Sikh-era Hammam and the Athdara Pavilion of Maharaja Ranjit Singh – in collaboration with the Aga Khan Cultural Service-Pakistan. The Loh Temple comprises a cluster of interconnected chambers within the Lahore Fort. It is an open-air space housing a memorial shrine. The temple, also known as the Lava Temple, is dedicated to Lava, one of Lord Ram's sons. According to Hindu beliefs, Lahore is named after him. It was partially restored in 2018.

US to slap new tariffs on S Korea

▸ United States President Donald Trump said Monday he is increasing tariffs on South Korean goods because the country's legislature has yet to approve the trade framework announced last year, AP/PTI reports from Washington.

Trump said on social media that import taxes would be raised on autos, lumber and pharmaceutical drugs from South Korea, with the rate on other goods going from 15% to 25%.

Social media ban for kids in France

▸ French lawmakers approved a bill banning social media for children under 15, paving the way for the measure to enter into force at the start of the next school year in September, AP/PTI reports from Paris.

The bill, which also bans the use of mobile phones in high schools, was adopted by a 130-21 vote late Monday. French President Emmanuel Macron has requested that the legislation be fast-tracked, and it will now be discussed by the Senate in the coming weeks.

'Doomsday Clock' closer to midnight

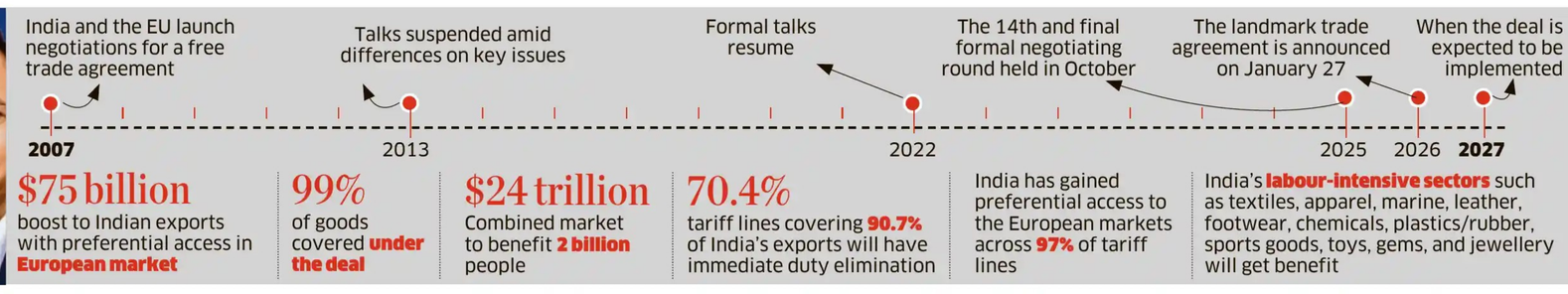
▸ Earth is closer than it's ever been to destruction as Russia, China, the US and other countries become "increasingly aggressive, adversarial, and nationalistic," a science-oriented advocacy group said and advanced its "Doomsday Clock" to 85 seconds till midnight, AP/PTI reports from Washington.

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists cited risks of nuclear war, climate change, misuse of biotechnology and AI without adequate controls as it made the annual announcement, which rates how close humanity is from ending. Last year, the clock advanced to 89 seconds to midnight.

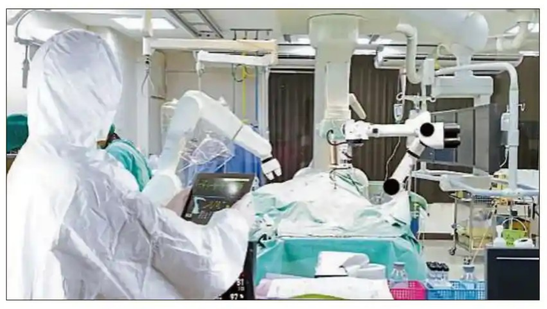
TRADE BET : The landmark India-EU FTA set to herald a new chapter for Indian exports

Cheaper therapies, autos and wine, a lot to cheer

"For the gems and jewellery sector, the agreement is a strong positive, as tariff rationalisation will significantly improve India's competitiveness in the European market."
RAJEEV TOSHNIWAL, CFO, Kisna Diamond & Gold Jewellery


India and the EU launch negotiations for a free trade agreement
2007
Talks suspended amid differences on key issues
2013
Formal talks resume
2022
The 14th and final formal negotiating round held in October
The landmark trade agreement is announced on January 27
2025
2026
When the deal is expected to be implemented
2027
$75 billion boost to Indian exports with preferential access in European market
99% of goods covered under the deal
$24 trillion Combined market to benefit 2 billion people
70.4% tariff lines covering 90.7% of India's exports will have immediate duty elimination
India has gained preferential access to the European markets across 97% of tariff lines
India's labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, apparel, marine, leather, footwear, chemicals, plastics/rubber, sports goods, toys, gems, and jewellery will get benefit

"India-EU deal should not be viewed as a substitute for an India-US deal. It is important to understand that India has a trade surplus of $45 bn with the US but only $25 bn with the EU. Therefore, we should tirelessly pursue the US-India deal, which India badly needs."
V K VIJAYAKUMAR, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited



MAHESH KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

The India-EU trade deal is expected to transform healthcare access in India, especially for high-cost specialty drugs and biologics. The deal will significantly bring down the cost of advanced therapies for Indian patients. In the short-term, a mild price reduction of 10-20% will happen, but the real impact will unfold over the next 2-3 years, with prices potentially dropping by 40-70% once local manufacturing scales up, biosimilars enter the market, and patent expiries align, said Saurav Ojha, Co-founder & Whole-time Director, Iberia Pharmaceuticals.

This shift is particularly critical in the context of weight-loss drugs in the GLP-1 class, such as semaglutide and tirzepatide. India already has over 101 million diabetics, alongside a rapidly rising obesity and metabolic syndrome burden, making access to these therapies a public health priority. "The trade deal can enable faster entry of biosimilars and generics, encourage local manufacturing, and reduce dependency on imports, which has historically kept these drugs expensive and out of reach. Such streamlined regulatory harmonisation can also help reduce time-to-market delays, thereby ensuring earlier availability of affordable alternatives," he said.

The FTA with the EU will benefit the Indian textile and apparel sector, as tariffs on textile and apparel products will become zero from the present 12%, thereby enhancing cost competitiveness and market access in the European Union. "This development creates opportunities for us to expand and explore demand across various European countries," said Sammir Dattani, Executive Director, Sanathan Textiles.

Europe is home to some of the world's leading fashion brands and automotive manufacturers, both of which rely extensively on imported textiles for apparel, upholstery, technical fabrics, and automotive interior applications. Enhanced access to this market provides Indian manufacturers an opportunity to participate more deeply across fashion-led consumption, as well as value-added technical and automotive textile segments, Dattani added.

Sachin Alug, CEO, NLB Services, said that as European organisations deepen delivery footprints in India, the focus is steadily moving beyond offshore hiring, toward building resilient Global Capability Centers with stronger governance, compliance, and operating rigour. This evolution is expected to drive sustained demand for specialised capabilities across compliance and trade, ESG and sustainability reporting, data protection and regulatory programmes, digital and engineering delivery, GCC build-outs, and workforce and vendor governance.

"The trade deal comes with high job creation potential, through a collective ecosystem of manufacturing & trade in traditional sectors, and collaboration in new-age sectors and services. Increased production, trade and consumption of goods and material will drive blue and grey collar opportunities, in sectors like automobiles, gems & jewels, iron & steel, food & agri, machinery & electric equipment etc," said Anil Ethanur, Co-founder, Xpheno.

The gems & jewellery sector said it will remove 2-4% duties on precious jewellery, unleashing huge export potential with the 27-member EU bloc — home to the world's elite buyers. The zero duty access will pave the way for doubling bilateral gems & jewellery trade to $10 billion within three years. Zero-duty access to the world's largest consumer market empowers export hubs in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and West Bengal to ramp up shipments of precious jewellery (plain and studded), silver, and imitation jewellery — capitalising on India's renowned design prowess.

"Especially with exports to the US down by 44%, this timely pact will help Indian exporters salvage lost ground. Amid soaring metal prices and evolving trade dynamics, the deal enhances margins, sharpens our competitive edge in design and craftsmanship, accelerates manufacturing, and generates jobs. For Indian jewellery retailers, it opens doors to expand brands across Europe, building on their rising global footprint," said Kirit Bhansali, Chairman, GJEPC.

Gear up to drive cheaper European luxury cars

HRITHIK KIRAN BAGADE
BENGALURU, DHNS

With India and the European Union announcing the conclusion of the landmark Free Trade Agreement (FTA) on Tuesday, European cars, especially luxury ones, are set to become cheaper in the Indian market.

Under the agreement, which is expected to come into force next year, India has committed to granting tariff concessions to the EU, including a phased reduction in import duties on vehicles from as high as 110% to as low as 10%. This is likely to impact a wide range of European cars, primarily imported as Completely Built Units (CBUs), with limited spillover benefits for Semi-Knocked Down (SKD) and Completely Knocked Down (CKD) models.

Import duties on EU-origin CBUs are expected to fall sharply from the current 70-100% range to about 40%, though the lower rates would apply to a capped number of vehicles with an import price above 15,000 euros, according to analysts. For CKD models, the reduction in tariffs on components and technical inputs could lower costs, potentially making even locally assembled luxury cars more affordable.

European automakers such as Mercedes-Benz, BMW and Audi already assemble several models in India through the CKD route. They see the FTA as a positive step, particularly in easing supply-chain bottlenecks, improving access to global technologies, and enabling smoother movement of parts and platforms.

Mercedes-Benz India said the FTA would have a positive cascading effect on customer sentiment in the luxury segment and support overall economic growth. "A gradual reduction in vehicle tariffs and full liberalisation of automotive parts are strategically important for the industry," said Santosh Iyer, Managing Director and CEO, Mercedes-Benz India.

He added that the pact could improve vehicle allocations, enhance availability of top-end global models, and accelerate access to new technologies. However, Mercedes-Benz would continue to focus on adding value through local production of world-class models in India.

BMW Group India also hailed the agreement, reiterating its long-standing support for free trade. "Free trade enhances fair market access, strengthens economic collaboration, and builds more resilient supply-chains," said Hardeep Singh Brar, President and CEO, BMW Group India.

Over 95% of BMW's sales in India come from locally manufactured models, with fully imported vehicles accounting for only about 5%. Brar said the FTA could open doors for introducing new and niche products, though he did not foresee immediate price changes. "We will evaluate the detailed implementation roadmap, timelines and qualification criteria once the fine print is available," he said, adding that deeper localisation could follow if demand scales.

Audi India echoed similar sentiments. Brand Director Balbir Singh Dhillon said the FTA could support innovation, supply-chain efficiency and technology collaboration across the automotive ecosystem, while cautioning that pricing implications would only become clear once final terms and timelines are known.

Skoda Auto Volkswagen India MD and CEO Piyush Arora said greater tariff certainty would allow automakers to assess the introduction of a wider range of European models, while supporting long-term investment, technology transfer and capability building in India.

"While we look forward to specific details of the India-EU FTA with respect to the auto industry, the calibrated approach to balance market access and domestic manufacturing should give us a win-win between increased global participation, and growth of the domestic auto industry with investments and employment. This will also enable increased choice for consumers in both regions," said Shailesh Chandra, MD and CEO of Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, and President of SIAM.

FTA to give competitive edge: Tiruppur exporters

E T B SIVAPRIYAN
CHENNAI, DHNS

Knitwear exporters in Tiruppur and in the textile hub of Coimbatore have welcomed the India-EU FTA, saying the deal will not just increase India's exports to the European Union, but enables the players here to effectively compete with key supplier countries like Bangladesh, Turkiye, and Vietnam.

Tiruppur Exporters' Association (TEA) President KM Subramanian told *DH* that the industry hopes to increase its exports to the EU market from the current 25%, to 40% within a couple of years of the agreement coming into operation. Subramanian said increasing capacities for exporters was not a big deal and that they can operationalise a new factory in about six months.

"This is a welcome development for us. Already, 25% of our exports go to Europe and we only hope that the FTA will give us further advantage. Since we supply quality products and most of the European brands already buy from Tiruppur, we only hope to increase the quantity. We also believe new brands will come to us," Subramanian said.

He added that exporters are already expanding capacities by opening new factories in several parts of Tamil Nadu, including the PM-MITRA park in Virudhunagar, and in the Cauvery Delta districts at the instance of the state government.

Global advantage

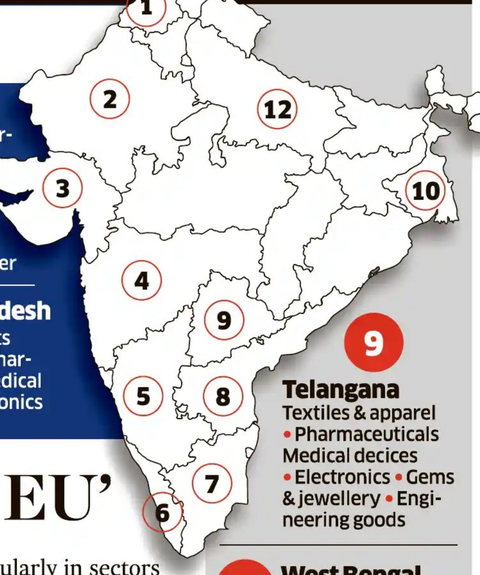
The FTA will also enhance global competitiveness, giving an edge to suppliers from Tiruppur. "We will now have advantage over Bangladesh and Vietnam, our main competitors. Once the FTA is operationalised, there will no duty which will help us compete better. It will only be about quality, not price," another exporter added.

The FTA has come at a time when the knitwear hub has lost thousands of crores due to the US imposing 50% tariff on Indian imports. "The US is a market that is irreplaceable due to sheer volumes. But the EU is a standalone market, and this agreement will help us make inroads into that market," he added.

The Southern India Mills Association (SIMA) said the FTA would enable India to effectively compete with key supplier countries such as Bangladesh, Turkiye, and Vietnam, which currently command shares of about 21%, 10%, and 5%, respectively.

12 Indian states stand to gain an export opportunity worth Rs 6.4 lakh crore

One trade deal 27 European markets



1 Punjab
Textiles & apparel • Engineering goods • Sports goods • Agri-products

2 Rajasthan
Sports goods • Handicrafts • Gems & jewellery • Textiles & apparel • Furniture

3 Gujarat
Textiles & apparel • Chemicals • Pharmaceuticals Medical decices • Engineering goods • Electronics • Gems & jewellery • Marine products

4 Maharashtra
Textiles & apparel • Engineering goods • Pharmaceuticals Medical decices • Gems & jewellery

5 Karnataka
Chemicals • Engineering goods • Electronics • Pharmaceuticals Medical decices • Textiles & apparel

6 Kerala
Marine products • Tea spices • Pharmaceuticals Medical decices

7 Tamil Nadu
Textiles & apparel • Leather & footwear • Engineering goods • Electronics • Plastic & rubber

8 Andhra Pradesh
Marine products • Chemicals • Pharmaceuticals Medical decices • Electronics

9 Telangana
Textiles & apparel • Pharmaceuticals Medical decices • Electronics • Gems & jewellery • Engineering goods

10 West Bengal
Tea spices • Marine products • Handicrafts

11 Assam
Tea spices • Marine products • Furniture • Handicrafts • Pharmaceuticals Medical decices • Minerals

12 Uttar Pradesh
Leather & footwear • Furniture • Handicrafts • Electronics • Agri-products

'Indian IT firms eye opportunities in EU'

UMA KANNAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

For the tech industry in India, the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA) will help in better EU market access. Currently, Europe is emerging as a promising destination for Indian IT services firms. From TCS, Infosys to Wipro and HCLTech, IT firms have been expanding their partnerships and winning major deals in Europe. Nasscom said while goods see major tariff cuts, services gains are more about opening markets and rules-based predictability.

"Indian IT firms stand to gain from greater opportunities in Europe, including easier cross-border provision of services and potentially improved mobility for professionals," the industry body said.

The agreement fosters deeper EU-India ties in technology, innovation, and digital areas. This could lead to more EU investment in India's IT ecosystem, JVs, R&D in AI, semiconductors, clean tech, and startups. Indian IT companies could benefit from technology transfer, co-creation, and expanded partnerships, it added.

Rajiv Desai, Global Service Delivery Head, 1Point1 said that in the FTA, technology is not an ancillary add-on; it is central. "This clearly recognises India's position as a global IT powerhouse and commits both partners to deeper cooperation on digital trade, secure cross-border data flows, digital authentication and e-services," he said.

Tech companies are already operating and delivering services across Europe, and this FTA will unlock new opportunities for Indian tech firms, foster innovation partnerships, and integrate India more fully into Europe's digital economy, he added.

Big boost for startups

The India-EU FTA will boost startups across various sectors and this also signals long-term commitment and can attract more patient and strategic capital.

The Commerce Ministry said India stands poised to leverage this FTA to create jobs, spur innovation, unlock opportunities across sectors, and enhance its competitiveness on the global stage.

UK-India cross border venture capital firm Pontaq Ventures said the FTA will eliminate or reduce tariffs on 96.6% of traded goods by value, and India will benefit from reduced EU tariffs on 99.5% of its goods over seven years.

Prem Barthasarathy, Founder and Managing Partner of Pontaq, said that as trade barriers reduce and cross-border commercial pathways become more predictable, Indian startups will increasingly be evaluated as global businesses, rather than domestic growth stories.

"This shift is likely to attract greater participation from European VC firms, strategic investors, and corporate venture arms, particularly in sectors aligned with Europe's strategic priorities such as clean energy, advanced manufacturing, deep tech, and digital infrastructure," he said.

Somdutta Singh, Serial Entrepreneur, Founder and CEO, Assiduus Global said for startups, the India-EU FTA matters even before it is fully in place. "Europe has long been an attractive market, but many founders postpone entry due to cost, complexity, and uncertainty. The prospect of a clearer trade framework already begins to ease some of that hesitation. The most-immediate impact is clarity," Singh said.

Europe is a large and stable market, yet startups often struggle with unpredictable tariffs, regulatory overhead, and long sales cycles. She said clearer trade rules and a more structured framework would make pricing, contracts, and market entry easier to plan. This clarity can pull Europe earlier into a startup's growth roadmap.

"India's proposal to sharply reduce import tariffs on passenger vehicles originating from the EU is likely to have the most visible impact at the top end of the market."
POONAM UPADHYAY
Director, Crisil Ratings

Rupee recovers 22 paise from all-time low to close at 91.68/$

MUMBAI, PTI: The rupee rebounded from its all-time low levels and gained 22 paise to close at 91.68 against the US dollar on Tuesday, on decline in US dollar index and India-EU FTA negotiations.

Forex traders said the rupee recovered marginally as traders rushed to cover broad dollar weakness.

Moreover, the deal over India-EU FTA boosted domestic market sentiments. However, rising commodity and crude oil prices capped sharp gains.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 91.82 and lost ground to touch an intra-day low of 91.90 against the greenback. The domestic unit settled for the day at 91.68, registering a gain of 22 paise from its previous close.

On Friday, the rupee hit a historic low of 92 per dollar and gained marginally to settle at 91.90.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias as the FTA may boost domestic market sentiments. Weakness in the US dollar index may further support the rupee," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan.

However, selling pressure from FIIs and ongoing geopolitical tensions may pressure the rupee at higher levels.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which measures the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.02% lower at 97.01.

Adani, Embraer plan regional aircraft facility in India

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Adani Group and Brazilian aerospace firm Embraer on Tuesday announced a strategic partnership to set up a regional aircraft manufacturing facility in India, besides collaborating on opportunities in supply-chain, aftermarket services and pilot training.

Executives of Adani Defence & Aerospace and Embraer, which makes commercial jets with up to 150 seats, signed the MoU at a function at the Ministry of Civil Aviation here. Details about the investments and the location of the proposed manufacturing facility were not disclosed. The collaborative industrial partnership aims to establish an assembly-line, followed by a phased increase in indigenisation to advance India's Regional Transport Aircraft (RTA) programme in alignment with 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and the UDAN regional connectivity vision, the companies said.

Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu (Centre) witnesses an MoU exchange between Adani Group and Embraer in New Delhi on Tuesday. PTI

Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu said the collaboration between the two companies can have manufacturing aircraft for the larger South Asian market. The need for regional transport aircraft has never been strong before and will help in providing solutions for many problems, he said.

Civil Aviation Secretary Samir Kumar Sinha said the collaboration is not just about assembling a regional aircraft, but also about progressive technology transfer, skilling, having robust supply-chain, as well as making India a trusted manufacturing hub for regional aircraft.

Adani Defence & Aerospace Director Jeet Adani said regional aviation is the backbone of economic expansion and with initiatives like UDAN, transforming air connectivity across Tier-2 and 3 cities, the need for an indigenous regional aviation ecosystem has become critical.

Embraer Commercial Aviation President and CEO Arjan Meijer said, "Together, we will evaluate the most-viable, advanced, and efficient solutions in support of India's RTA ambitions and their potential for implementation."

Amazon global lay-off may reduce more jobs in India

BENGALURU, DHNS: E-commerce giant Amazon is reportedly planning to reduce 16,000 more jobs globally, and this latest round of layoffs might affect more Indian employees. Though the exact number is not yet known, sources said employees in India are likely to receive job cut notice in coming weeks.

An email sent to Amazon India did not elicit any response. Sources added that till Tuesday, no employees in India have received any job cut notice.

According to reports, the layoff might affect teams in Amazon Web Services, Prime Video and retail, among other functions.

Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai offices may face the biggest impact. This second round of layoff is part of the company's plans to trim nearly 30,000 corporate workers. In October last year, Amazon announced 14,000 corporate job cuts, and in India, at least 800 people received pink slips.

Amazon employs about 1,30,000 people in India.

Earlier, the company tied the job cuts to the surge of AI. Beth Galetti, Senior Vice-President of People Experience and Technology at Amazon, had said in a note that this generation of AI is the most-transformative technology they have seen since the Internet, and it is enabling companies to innovate much faster than ever before.

Anil Kumble

I don't see Varun struggling with dew: Kumble

NEW DELHI, PTI : The legendary Anil Kumble has backed leg-spinner Varun Chakravarthy to spearhead India's spin attack during next month's T20 World Cup as he believes he will have no issue dealing with the evening dew that could be more troublesome for a wrist spinner like Kuldeep Yadav.

The T20 showpiece is scheduled to be held from February 7 to March 8 in venues across India and Sri Lanka. Speaking on JioHotstar, Kumble said dew is certainly going to play its part in the tournament.

"...especially during the time of the World Cup in February and March, with matches being played late in the evening. It's not going to be easy. As spinners, you tend to get used to bowling with a wet ball; it's nothing new.

"However, one aspect that India can certainly take comfort from is that I don't think it affects someone like Varun Chakaravarthy because of the grip he has on the ball and the pace at which he bowls."

India's spin trio of Varun, Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel have been consistently doing well in recent months, but Kumble identified the Tamil Nadu man as the biggest plus among the tweakers.

"I don't think dew will bother him (Varun) that much. Yes, it's not the same as bowling with a dry ball, of course, but with a wet ball, I don't see Varun struggling too much. Similarly, Axar Patel should also be fine. The one person who might find it a bit more difficult is Kuldeep Yadav with a wet ball because of his bowling style."

In-form Barry rescues a point for Everton

LIVERPOOL, AFP: Everton striker Thierno Barry extended his hot streak with a late equaliser to rescue a 1-1 draw against lowly Leeds in the Premier League on Monday.

David Moyes' side were booed off at half-time after James Justin put Leeds ahead at the Hill Dickinson Stadium.

But Barry eased Everton fans' frustration with a composed finish 14 minutes from full-time.

The 23-year-old has scored four goals in his last five league games after netting just once in his first 18 following his move from Villarreal last year.

Everton are in 10th place, while Leeds sit six points above the Premier League relegation zone.

Wins for West Ham and Nottingham Forest at the weekend had increased the pressure on Leeds to counter with a victory of their own as the relegation battle heats up. With that in mind, blowing the lead was a missed opportunity for Daniel Farke's team, who have lost only one of their last 10 league matches.

TENNIS AUSTRALIAN OPEN

No stopping Alcaraz, Sabalenka

Zverev ousts Tien; Svitolina knocks out Gauff for semis spot

MELBOURNE, AFP

Carlos Alcaraz warned he was improving all the time as he swept into his maiden Australian Open semifinal Tuesday and a clash with Alexander Zverev, while Ukraine's Elina Svitolina faces Aryna Sabalenka in the last four.

Spanish world No. 1 Alcaraz silenced a partisan Melbourne crowd in brushing aside home hope Alex de Minaur 7-5, 6-2, 6-1 at Rod Laver Arena.

The 22-year-old Alcaraz is yet to drop a set as he arrows in on a first Australian Open crown.

"I'm just really happy how I'm playing every match, each round my level is increasing," he said, in a warning to his rivals.

"Today I felt really comfortable, playing great tennis that I am really proud of," added Alcaraz, who had never previously gone beyond the quarter-finals in Australia in four previous visits.

Should he beat Zverev and then win Sunday's final, he would surpass compatriot and legend Rafael Nadal as the youngest man to win all four majors.

Nadal was 24 when he did it.

In a statement of his own, Zverev said he was playing without pain for the first time in 12 months after last year's runner-up blasted past young American Learner Tien.

Zverev sent down 24 aces in a 6-3, 6-7 (5/7), 6-1, 7-6 (7/3) victory. World No. 3 Zverev is desperate to finally win a Grand Slam at age 28, having lost three major finals including being well beaten in last year's title decider by Jannik Sinner.

Top-ranked Sabalenka, also a runner-up in Melbourne last year, is aiming for her third Australian Open title in four years. She won back-to-back titles here in 2023 and 2024 and lost the final a year ago to Madison Keys.

The first of the four quarterfinals scheduled on Day 10 was played outdoors, despite predictions of the temperature peaking at 45 degrees Celsius (113 Fahrenheit) in Melbourne.

Jovic had three breakpoint chances in the ninth game, which lasted 10 minutes, but wasn't able to convert against the world's No. 1-ranked woman. In the last game, Sabalenka served an ace on break point and clinched it with another ace on match point. She saved all five break points she faced.

Gauff's racquet smash

Coco Gauff folded in 59 error-strewn minutes as Svitolina set up a semifinal against Sabalenka.

Belarusian world No. 1 Sabalenka tamed 18-year-old American Iva Jovic 6-3, 6-0 in 38C temperatures on Rod Laver Arena.

In the evening, with the roof on because of the suffocating heat, 12th seed Svitolina stunned third seed Gauff 6-1, 6-2.

Ukraine's Elina Svitolina returns during her quarterfinal win against the USA's Coco Gauff at the Australian Open in Melbourne on Tuesday. REUTERS

Television images showed Gauff repeatedly smashing her racquet in the bowels of the stadium afterwards.

"I tried to go somewhere where I thought there wasn't a camera because I don't necessarily like breaking rackets.

"I broke one racket (at the) French Open, I think, and I said I would never do it again on court because I don't feel like that's a good representation. So, yeah, maybe some conversations can be had."

However, the 21-year-old American said it was better to shatter a racket than to take out any frustrations on her support team.

"They're good people. They don't deserve that, and I know I'm emotional," Gauff said.

"So, yeah, I just took the minute to go and do that.

"I don't think it's a bad thing. Like I said, I don't try to do it on court in front of kids and things like that, but I do know I need to let out that emotion."

The Ukrainian, who is on a 10-match win streak after a title-winning run at Auckland this month, added: "It means the world to me."

For two-time Grand Slam winner Gauff, a decade younger at 21, it was more Melbourne misery.

The quarter-finals conclude on Wednesday, with 10-time Melbourne champion Novak Djokovic and title-holder Jannik Sinner in action.

Djokovic faces Italian fifth seed Lorenzo Musetti and Sinner plays Ben Shelton of the United States.

In the women's draw, Jessica Pegula and Amanda Anisimova meet in an all-American affair and second seed Iga Swiatek faces fifth seed Elena Rybakina.

Temperatures are scheduled to be considerably cooler.

Results (quarterfinals, prefix denotes seeding): Singles: Men: 3-Alexander Zverev (Ger) bt 25-Learner Tien (USA) 6-3, 6-7 (5), 6-1, 7-6 (3); 1-Carlos Alcaraz (Esp) bt 6-Alex De Minaur (Aus) 7-5, 6-2, 6-1. **Women:** 1-Aryna Sabalenka (Blr) bt 29-Iva Jovic (USA) 6-3, 6-0; 12-Elina Svitolina (Ukr) bt 3-Coco Gauff (USA) 6-1, 6-2.

'Supporting Bangla is okay but not at cost of Pak cricket'

KARACHI, PTI

Pakistan should refrain from spoiling its relation with world governing body and support to Bangladesh must not come at the cost of national cricket, former players and Board officials said in one voice as PCB has deferred its decision on participation in the upcoming T20 World Cup.

The Chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Mohsin Naqvi has set Friday or Monday as the deadline for confirming Pakistan's participation or withdrawal from the World Cup, a situation which emerged after Bangladesh's ouster from the tournament.

Former Pakistan Test captain Muhammad Hafeez opined that PCB must send team for the World Cup while former PCB Chairman Khalid Mahmood and secretary Arif Ali Abbasi didn't see any logic in not sending the team.

"I can understand Pakistan supporting Bangladesh but what purpose will PCB achieve by not sending its team apart from spoiling relations with the International Cricket Council and member boards," Abbasi said.

Abbasi, who worked in the board in the time of stalwarts like Jagmohan Dalmiya, and IS Bindra, said that PCB must send the team.

"What about our relations with Sri Lanka? Obviously Sri Lanka will suffer losses if Pakistan doesn't go as all our matches are in Sri Lanka including matches with India," he said.

Mahmood said that PCB's stance was laudable but it must remain sensible and centred on serving Pakistan cricket.

"We have to remember that except for Pakistan no other cricket board supported the Bangladesh demand to move matches from India. I can understand the stance taken by the Bangladesh board but it is also a fact no one supported them in the ICC meeting," Mahmood said.

CM Cup in the city from February 21

BENGALURU, DHNS: The CM Cup shuttle badminton tournament will be held in Bengaluru on February 21-22, featuring eight franchise teams and a mixed-team format. The tournament will take place at the Karnataka Badminton Association courts here.

Each franchise will have a 15-member squad comprising men and women. The tournament will be played across multiple categories, including men's singles and doubles, women's singles and doubles, mixed doubles and power doubles.

Teams (owners): The Elite Badminton (Prasanna), Aesthetic Attackers (Roopa), Telecom Sky Strikers (Narasimhamurthy), Inspire Challengers (Lingaraju), KGF Strikers (KGF Babu), Team Cafe Divyyam (Palani Prakash), Pro Win Punchers (Anand), Sharadha Strikers (Yogesh).

Injury-hit Napoli on the brink of elimination

MILAN, AFP

Napoli are on the brink of being eliminated from the Champions League as the troubled Italian club face Chelsea on Wednesday racked by a deep injury crisis and a faltering Serie A title defence.

Sat just inside the elimination zone on only eight points from seven matches after last week's miserable 1-1 draw at FC Copenhagen, Napoli must beat Chelsea to scrape a place in next month's play-offs.

That will be no easy task with the Blues, Antonio Conte's former club, needing a win to stay in the top eight and bag direct qualification for the last 16.

And Napoli come into the game still stinging from a 3-0 defeat at Juventus which left the Italian champions nine points behind current Serie A leaders Inter Milan.

Sunday's loss in Turin was a big slap in the face for Napoli and Juve icon Conte, who was full of praise for his players who have had to dig deep in the face of a host injuries.

"Before today the last match we'd lost was against Udinese (on December 14). We even won the Italian Super Cup in an emergency, an emergency which has got even worse," Conte told DAZN on Sunday.

"The boys need big support from the fans... We're going through a difficult period and I expect the fans to get behind the team."

Conte's bid to become the first Napoli coach to win back-to-back Serie A titles has been hampered by physical problems in his squad right from the start of the season.

It started with Romelu Lukaku suffering a hamstring injury in pre-season which kept him out of action until the 79th minute of Sunday's loss.

Lukaku replaced academy graduate Antonio Vergara who played in place of Italy international Matteo Politano, while new signing Giovane made his debut as a substitute, with Conte later saying he hadn't even seen him train.

Conte has also lost giant goalkeeper Vanja Milinkovic-Savic to a hamstring knock while winger David Neres flew to London for ankle surgery on Monday which will likely keep the Brazilian out until April.

Kevin De Bruyne has been out since October and won't be back until the Spring after surgery on his right hamstring, while another key midfielder in Andre-Frank Anguissa was supposed to be back on Sunday from another hamstring injury but was left out due to back problems.

Schedule: Barcelona vs Copenhagen, Benfica vs Real Madrid, Napoli vs Chelsea, Paris vs Newcastle, Ajax vs Olympiacos, Arsenal vs Kairat Almaty, Athletic Bilbao vs Sporting CP, Atletico vs Bodo/Glimt, Bayer Leverkusen vs Villarreal, Club Brugge vs Marseille, Borussia Dortmund vs Inter Milan Eintracht Frankfurt vs Tottenham Hotspur, Liverpool vs Qarabag, Manchester City vs Galatasaray, AS Monaco vs Juventus, Pafos vs Slavia Prague, Royale Union SG vs Atalanta (all 1:30 am, Thursday).

An injury-hit Napoli have received a Romelu Lukaku boost as the forward has replaced Kevin De Bruyne in the squad for the crucial Champions League match against Chelsea. AFP

Ashmita beats Yi-Ting to enter main draw

BANGKOK, PTI : India's Ashmita Chaliha notched up two fighting wins to progress to the women's singles main draw at the Thailand Masters Super 300 badminton tournament here on Tuesday.

The 26-year-old from Assam's Guwahati, who was part of the gold-medal winning Indian team at the 2024 Asia Team Championships in Selangor, defeated Chinese Taipei's Hung Yi-Ting 21–15, 12–21, 21–12 in 42 minutes in her opening qualification match.

Later, Ashmita quelled a spirited challenge from Korea's Kim Joo Eun 21–11, 10–21, 21–16 in 45 minutes.

Ashmita Chaliha

She will face fellow Indian Devika Sihag in the main draw.

In another match, Shreya Lele lost to Indonesia's Ni Kadek Dhinda Amartya Pratiwi 12–21, 21–12, 15–21 in the qualification stage.

In mixed doubles qualification, M Jaglan and L Jaglan lost to Chinese Taipei's Bo-Yuan Chen and Sung Yi-Hsuan 12–21 8–21 in a lop-sided contest.

In the men's doubles, P Krishnamurthy Roy and S Pratheek K lost to Malaysia's fourth seed N Azriyn and Tan W K 20–22, 20–22.

The women's doubles pair of Ashwini Bhat K and Shikha Gautam suffered a 14–21, 12–21 loss to Indonesia's F Kusuma and M Puspitasari, seeded fifth, in 33 minutes.

Reis equaliser saves Girona

MADRID, AP: Victor Reis scored with a diving header in injury time to give Girona a 1-1 home draw against Getafe and extend its unbeaten run to four matches in the Spanish league.

Girona was one of form sides coming into the game at the Estadio Municipal de Montilivi but it went behind after 59 minutes when Luis Vazquez got on the end of a nice delivery from Juan Antonio Iglesias Sanchez.

However, Reis threw himself at a last-gasp cross from Alex Moreno to lift the side into 10th place.

UNIVERSITY OF HORTICULTURAL SCIENCES, BAGALKOT
Office of the Estate Officer, Udyanagiri, Near Simikeri By-Pass, Bagalkot –587104

No: SPO/EO/UHSB/TN-214/2025-26 Date: 27-01-2026

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

The University of Horticultural Sciences, Bagalkot is inviting short term tender for the Online / Offline Training Programme for SC/ST students of the use of various campus of the university. The interested suppliers are requested to participate in the tender online through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal. For more details, please contact Ph.No: 08354-230258 and visit the link https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in for detailed specification, conditions and schedule of events and notification.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

1	Last date and time for tender queries/ clarification.	31–01–2026	@	14.00 Hrs
2	Last date and time for receipt of tenders.	04–02–2026	@	16.00 Hrs
3	Date and time for opening of Technical Bid	06–02–2026	@	11.00 Hrs
4	Date and time for opening of Financial Bid (if possible)	09–02–2026	@	12.00 Hrs

All bidders shall get updated with corrigendum / addendum received from time to time during the entire tender process by visiting KPP portal.

Sd-ESTATE OFFICER
UHS, BAGALKOT

DIPR/BGK/RO-NO-526/KSMCA/2024-25

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
Office of the Commissioner, Rehabilitation & Resettlement, Land Acquisition, Upper Krishna Project, Navanagar Bagalkote.
Phone: 08354-200462 Email : gmlaqukp1@gmail.com

Com/Est/SOA/18-19/CWD-55A/23-24/850 Date: 12-01-2026.

Applications are invited from retired Judges for Special Officer, Legal Cell, UKP, Bagalkote.

Applications are invited from retired District Judges or retired Senior Civil Judges, below the age of 65 years, for the post of Special Officer, Legal Cell, and Ex-officio Deputy Secretary to the Government Law Department, Upper Krishna Project, Bagalkote, to work on a contract basis. Those selected for the post will receive a fixed monthly consolidated pay as per Rule 313(b) of the Karnatka Civil Service Rules 1958. The appointment will be for a period of one year.

Interest retired District Judges or retired Senior Civil Judges are requested to apply directly to the office the Commissioner, Rehabilitation & Resettlement, Land Acquisition, Upper Krishna Project, Navanagar Bagalkote/ E-mail Id: gmlaqukp1@gmail.com within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. along with their self-details and attested documents.

Office Note Approved by Commissioner

Sd/-General Manager,
Rehabilitation & Resettlement,
Land Acquisition, UKP, Navanagar Bagalkote.

DIPR/BGK/RO-NO-528/KSMCA/2025-26

ಸಮಗ್ರ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ
"ಬದಲಾವಣೆಯ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ಭವಿಷ್ಯದ ನಿರ್ಮಾಣ" 2025–26
ಉಪನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರು (ಆಡಳಿತ) ಹಾಗೂ ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಯೋಜನಾ ಸಮನ್ವಯಾಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳ ಕಛೇರಿ, ಶಾಲಾ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ಇಲಾಖೆ
ಸಮಗ್ರ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ–ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ, ಚಿಕ್ಕಬಳ್ಳಾಪುರ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ, ಚಿಕ್ಕಬಳ್ಳಾಪುರ.
ssa16chikkaballapur@gmail.com, Phone No : 08156-273395

ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ:ಸಶಿಕ/ಸಪ್ರೌಶಾವಿಸಾಖ/01/2025–26 ದಿನಾಂಕ:23.01.2026

ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ

ಸಮಗ್ರ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಯೋಜನೆಯಡಿ 308 ಕೆ.ಪಿ.ಎಸ್. ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದಡಿಯಲ್ಲಿ 06 ಕೆ.ಪಿ.ಎಸ್. ಶಾಲೆಗಳು ಮತ್ತು 82 ಕೆ.ಪಿ.ಎಸ್. ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದಡಿಯಲ್ಲಿ 02 ಕೆ.ಪಿ.ಎಸ್. ಶಾಲೆಗಳು ಹಾಗೂ ಐ.ಸಿ.ಟಿ. ಯೋಜನೆಯಡಿ 04 ಶಾಲೆಗಳಿಗೆ, ಒಟ್ಟು 12 ಶಾಲೆಗಳಿಗೆ ಕಂಪ್ಯೂಟರ್ ಪರಿಕರಗಳನ್ನು ಸರಬರಾಜು ಮಾಡುವ ಸಂಬಂಧ ಅರ್ಹ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಯನ್ನು ಆಯ್ಕೆ ಮಾಡಲು ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಆಹ್ವಾನಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಮಾಹಿತಿಗಾಗಿ. www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in ನಲ್ಲಿ ಮಾಹಿತಿ ಪಡೆಯಬಹುದು. ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಲು **ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕ 05.02.2026 ಸಮಯ ಸಂಜೆ 5.00 ಗಂಟೆ**

ಸಹಿ/– (ವಿ.ರಮೇಶ್), ಉಪನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರು(ಆಡಳಿತ) ಹಾಗೂ ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಯೋಜನಾ ಸಮನ್ವಯಾಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳು, ಸಮಗ್ರ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ–ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ, ಚಿಕ್ಕಬಳ್ಳಾಪುರ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ.

ವಾಸಾಸಂಇ/ಚಿಕ್ಕಬಳ್ಳಾಪುರ/ಆರ್.ಓ.ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ:387/ಕೆಎಸ್ಎಂಸಿಎ/2025–26

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ
ಸಮಾಜ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣ ಇಲಾಖೆ
ಉಪ ನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರ ಕಛೇರಿ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಗ್ರಾಮಾಂತರ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ, # 217, 2ನೇ ಮಹಡಿ, ಜಿಲ್ಲಾಡಳಿತ ಭವನ, ಬೀರಸಂದ್ರ, ದೇವನಹಳ್ಳಿ ತಾಲ್ಲೂಕು, ಬೆಂ.ಗ್ರಾ.ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ–562110

ಸಂ:ಉನಿ/ಬೆಂಗ್ರಾ/ಸಿಆರ್–ಹೊ.ಗು.ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಕಾಲ್–2/2025–26 ದಿನಾಂಕ :27.01.2026

ಇ–ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಗ್ರಾಮಾಂತರ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಯ ಸಮಾಜ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣ ಇಲಾಖೆ ಮತ್ತು ಪರಿಶಿಷ್ಟ ವರ್ಗಗಳ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣ ಇಲಾಖೆಯ ಮೆಟ್ರಿಕ್ ಪೂರ್ವ ಮತ್ತು ಮೆಟ್ರಿಕ್ ನಂತರದ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿನಿಲಯ/ ಆಶ್ರಮ ಶಾಲೆ/ಮೊರಾರ್ಜಿ ದೇಸಾಯಿ ವಸತಿ ಶಾಲೆ/ಕಿತ್ತೂರು ರಾಣಿ ಚೆನ್ನಮ್ಮ ವಸತಿ ಶಾಲೆ/ಡಾ॥ ಬಿ.ಆರ್.ಅಂಬೇಡ್ಕರ್ ವಸತಿ ಶಾಲೆ/ ಅಟಲ್ ಬಿಹಾರಿ ವಾಜಪೇಯಿ ಶಾಲೆ/ಶ್ರೀಮತಿ ಇಂದಿರಾಗಾಂಧಿ/ಏಕಲವ್ಯ ಮಾದರಿಯ ವಸತಿ ಶಾಲೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಖಾಲಿ ಇರುವ ಭೋದಕ/ಭೋದಕೇತರ ಸಿಬ್ಬಂದಿಗಳನ್ನು ಹೊರಸಂಪನ್ಮೂಲ ಕಂಪನಿಗಳಿಂದ ಪಡೆಯಲು ಇ–ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಆಹ್ವಾನಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

2025–26 ನೇ ಸಾಲಿಗೆ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಗ್ರಾಮಾಂತರ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಯ ಸಮಾಜ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣ ಇಲಾಖೆ ಮತ್ತು ಪರಿಶಿಷ್ಟ ವರ್ಗಗಳ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣ ಇಲಾಖೆಯ ವಸತಿ ಶಾಲೆಗಳು, ಮೆಟ್ರಿಕ್ ಪೂರ್ವ/ ಮೆಟ್ರಿಕ್ ನಂತರದ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿನಿಲಯ/ ಆಶ್ರಮ ಶಾಲೆಗಳು/ ಮೊರಾರ್ಜಿ ದೇಸಾಯಿ ವಸತಿ ಶಾಲೆ/ಕಿತ್ತೂರು ರಾಣಿ ಚೆನ್ನಮ್ಮ ವಸತಿ ಶಾಲೆ/ ಡಾ॥ ಬಿ.ಆರ್.ಅಂಬೇಡ್ಕರ್ ವಸತಿ ಶಾಲೆ/ ಅಟಲ್ ಬಿಹಾರಿ ವಾಜಪೇಯಿ ಶಾಲೆ/ ಶ್ರೀಮತಿ ಇಂದಿರಾಗಾಂಧಿ/ಏಕಲವ್ಯ ಮಾದರಿಯ ವಸತಿ ಶಾಲೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಖಾಲಿ ಇರುವ ಭೋದಕ/ಭೋದಕೇತರ ಸಿಬ್ಬಂದಿಗಳನ್ನು ಪಡೆಯಲು ಇ–ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ನ್ನು **(https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in)** ಮೂಲಕ ಆಹ್ವಾನಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಆಸಕ್ತ ಅರ್ಹ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ದಾರರು ನಿಗದಿ ಪಡಿಸಿದ ದಿನಾಂಕದೊಳಗೆ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಭಾಗವಹಿಸಲು ಕೋರಿದೆ. ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ನ್ನು **ದಿನಾಂಕ:06.02–2026 ರಂದು ಸಂಜೆ 5.00** ಗಂಟೆಯೊಳಗಾಗಿ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸತಕ್ಕದ್ದು, ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಮಾಹಿತಿಗಾಗಿ ಉಪನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರ ಕಛೇರಿ, ಸಮಾಜ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣ ಇಲಾಖೆ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಗ್ರಾಮಾಂತರ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ. ನಂ.217, 2ನೇ ಮಹಡಿ, ಜಿಲ್ಲಾಡಳಿತ ಭವನ, ಬೀರಸಂದ್ರ ಗ್ರಾಮ, ದೇವನಹಳ್ಳಿ ತಾಲ್ಲೂಕು–562110. ದೂ.ಸಂ–080–29787447/9632526296 ಇಲ್ಲಿ ಸಂಪರ್ಕಿಸಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಇ–ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್‌ನ ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ವೀಕ್ಷಿಸಬಹುದು ಎಂದು ಸಮಾಜ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣ ಇಲಾಖೆ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಗ್ರಾಮಾಂತರ ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಉಪನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರಾದ **ಶ್ರೀಮತಿ ಪ್ರೇಮ.ಟಿ.ಎಲ್.ಎಸ್** ರವರು ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ತಿಳಿಸಿದ್ದಾರೆ.

ಸಹಿ/–ಉಪನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರು
ಸಮಾಜ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣ ಇಲಾಖೆ,
ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಗ್ರಾಮಾಂತರ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ

ವಾ.ಸಾ.ಸಂ.ಇ/ವಾಪ್ರ/5215/ಎಸ್.ಎಸ್.ಸಿ/2025–26

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
ZILLA PANCHAYAT BELAGAVI
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,
PANCHAYAT RAJ ENGINEERING DIVISION, CHIKODI
Email :preckdee@gmail.com Office Phone No: 08338-272131,

No.PRE/CKD/Db/kppp/2025-26/7316 Date: 22-01-2026

Kppp- ,SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

On behalf of Governor of Karnataka, State, Item Rate (Technical bids and Financial bids through E-Mode), E-Bids are invited for the following works through standard tender document KW-1, KW-2, KW-3, KW-4 (Standard Tender Document) from the eligible Contractors, registered in P.R.E. Department, & with kppp registration Bangalore, on "turn-key", basis only.

1]Last date of request for issue of blank E-bid document through e-Procurment Date: Other works:22-01-2026 To 02-02-2026, 2]Bid Closing & submission Date: Other works:02-02-2026 AT 04:00 PM, 3]Tender Opening Date: Other works:04-02-2026 AT 11:00 AM, 4]Pre Bid Meeting Date: [KW-3 & 4 Works Only]:31-01-2026 AT 05:00 PM, 5]Techanical Bid Opening Date: [KW-3 & 4 Works Only]:04-02-2026 AT 11:00 AM, 6]Financial Bid Opening Date: [KW-3 & 4 Works Only]:06-02-2026 AT 11:00 AM

General Works Indent No's:21917, 22551, 22969, 21747, 22945, 22966, 22949, 22896, 22999, 23301, 22888, 22764, 21611, 22864, 22756, 22759, 15386, 19387, 17487, 7986, SC Works Indent No's:23315, 23312, 22890, 22889, ST Works Indent No's:22893, 23307, 22887, Category 1 Works Indent No's:22886, 22891, 21610, Category 2A Works Indent No's:22895, 23354, 23366, 21744, 21808, RDPR/2024-25/IND5281, 10th Call, RDPR/2024-25/IND5282, 10th Call, RDPR/2024-25/IND9755, 4th Call RDPR/2024-25/IND4896, 11th Call, RDPR/2024-25/IND4899, 12th Call.

For further details, the agencies may contact the office of the undersigned, during office hours, or may visit web site: https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in

Sd/-Executive Engineer
P.R.E. Division, Chikodi.

DIPR/BGM/RO-NO-1702/KSMCA/2025-26

Shruthi L

Shruthi wears snooker crown

BENGALURU, DHNS: Tamil Nadu's Shruthi L came up with a gritty show to clinch her maiden junior girls' snooker title on the final day of the National Championships in Bahadurgarh, Haryana on Tuesday.

The Coimbatore lass scored a straight-frame win over Aanya Patel in the best-of-five frame contest. Shruthi's 3-0 verdict also denied a double for the girl from Gujarat.

Even though Shruthi won in straight frames, she had to play out of her skin in the first two frames that could have gone either way.

Results (all finals): Junior girls: Snooker: L Shruthi (TN) bt Aanya Patel (Guj) 3-0 (54-40, 49-48, 55-7).
Billiards: Aanya Patel (Guj) bt Afeefa Thabassam (TN) 105-99.
Masters: Rajat Khaneja (Har) bt Sundeep Gulati (Del) 4-2 (66-27, 40-69, 19-64, 75-8, 103-0, 73-34).

Gukesh loses to Bluebaum, Erigaisi draws

WIJK AAN ZEE (THE NETHERLANDS), PTI: World champion D Gukesh endured another setback at the Tata Steel Masters, going down to Germany's Matthias Bluebaum in the ninth round, while Arjun Erigaisi was held to a quick draw by American Hans Moke Niemann.

World Cup winner Javokhir Sindarov settled for a draw with sole leader and fellow Uzbek Nodirbek Abdusattorov, who stayed in command with six points.

Sindarov was joined in second place by Dutchman Jorden van Foreest on 5.5 points, half a point ahead of Niemann, with four rounds remaining. Gukesh and Erigaisi are stuck on four points each.

IN BRIEF

Subhathra stars in K'taka win

▸ Subhathra A scored five goals as Karnataka handed Andhra Pradesh an 8-0 drubbing in the under-13 Asmitha Zonal Football League at the Bangalore Football Stadium, reports DHNS.

Results: Karnataka: 8 (Gouri Ninganagouda Patil 7th, Anvi Joshi 18th, Subhathra A 20th, 21st, 23rd, 29th, 42nd, Pranitha VR 50th) bt Andhra Pradesh: 0; Pondicherry: 20 (Rajeshwari 1st, 8th, 10th, 29th, 34th, 37th, 45th, Eshanthika 3rd, M Sivasri 4th, 45th, 46th, 49th, Sebiya S 12th, 36th, Subha 16th, 36th, Mahadevi 30th, 47th, 48th, 50th) Andaman: 0.

PSG sign Barca's Fernandez

▸ Paris Saint-Germain has signed 18-year-old midfielder Dro Fernandez from Barcelona on a four-year deal, reports AP from Paris.

No financial details were disclosed.

◆ ON TV ◆

CRICKET

4th T20I: India vs New Zealand (7 pm). **LIVE** on **Star Sports 1, JioHotstar.**

U-19 WC: Australia vs West Indies (1 pm). **LIVE** on **Star Sports Select 2, JioHotstar.**

TENNIS

Australian Open: Quarterfinals (7:30 am). **LIVE** on **Sony Sports Network, SonyLIV.**

FOOTBALL

Champions League: Barcelona vs Copenhagen, Benfica vs Real Madrid, Napoli vs Chelsea, Paris vs Newcastle (all 1:30 am, Thursday). **LIVE** on **Sony Sports Network.**

CRICKET FOURTH T20I

India's spinners eye turnaround

Kuldeep, Chakravarthy's outings have been sub-par against NZ

VISAKHAPATNAM, PTI

With the series already sealed, India will be hoping for a positive turn in their spinners' performance while attempting to extend the total domination over New Zealand in the fourth T20I here on Wednesday.

The batting storm kicked up by Abhishek Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav and Ishan Kishan and the resultant 3-0 series lead has so far masked the underwhelming outings of two premier spinners -- Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravarthy.

Kuldeep has picked up two wickets in as many matches, but looked a distant shadow of his bewitching self, conceding 9.5 runs an over.

The left-arm wrist spinner had three expensive overs, that leaked 32 runs, even when India limited the Kiwis to 153 for 9 riding on brilliant spells by Jasprit Bumrah, Ravi Bishnoi and Hardik Pandya.

In fact, the modest effort was a continuation from the preceding ODI series in which he took three wickets across three matches and gave away 7.28 runs an over.

Chakravarthy, who was rested for the third T20I, is a slightly different case as he has played in two high-scoring matches when the visitors scored 190 and 208.

But the usual zip has not been there in his bowling. The little time away might have been useful in replenishing him.

India's wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav has managed to pick just two wickets and has leaked runs at 9.5 an over. PTI

Kuldeep or Bishnoi?

In that context, India will ponder whether to persist with Bishnoi (4-0-18-2 in Guwahati) in the fourth match, and bring back Chakravarthy in place of Kuldeep to allow the latter some breathing space.

India will also keep a close eye on the fitness of all-rounder Axar Patel, as he has not played since the first game at Nagpur because of a finger injury.

While the bowling pieces in this series have still not entirely fallen in their places, the hosts' batting has been a different story.

The top-order reshaped India's T20 batting in this series and third match resembled an extended Power Play. Abhishek has scored at a strike-rate of over 300 while Suryakumar and Kishan have maintained a strike-rate close to 230.

Such has been the fury in their batting that India have so far spent only a combined 25.2 overs in the park while chasing 209 and 154 (363 runs in total) in the second and third T20Is.

If the nature of the pitch and the amount of dew in Visakhapatnam are anything to go by, this match too will not be offering a different script.

The only out of sync piece, surprisingly too, is the wretched form of Sanju Samson, who has been given his preferred opening slot in this series.

Perhaps, dawdling in the middle-order the whole of last year without role clarity has affected his rhythm but the talent rush in Indian cricket has made it mandatory for Samson to come good on almost all occasions.

However, pitiful numbers in this series so far -- 16 runs in three matches at 5.33 -- have made the ride rough for him.

But with a recuperating Tilak Varma having an extended time away from the team, Samson might be getting another game here to vindicate the management's faith in him.

Can Kiwis fly high?

Little has gone right for New Zealand in the ongoing series.

Their batters found occasional spark but bowlers failed to mount a response to Indian batters' onslaught.

That Jacob Duffy, with an economy of 10.30, is their most parsimonious bowler tells a story in itself, but his numbers shine bright in comparison to other bowlers.

They offer a stunning read too. Matt Henry (13.80), Kyle Jamieson (14.20), Mitchell Santner (13.14) and Ish Sodhi (12.50) have all been taken to the cleaners by the home side.

Devine stars as Gujarat clinch last-ball thriller

Charani's four-for in vain as Delhi chase falls short

VADODARA, PTI

Gujarat Giants held their nerve in a pulsating finish to edge past Delhi Capitals by three runs in a Women's Premier League encounter, with Sophie Devine producing a decisive bowling spell to earn the Player of the Match award. Defending 175, the Giants survived a late onslaught to seal a narrow victory in a contest that went down to the final delivery.

Chasing the target, Delhi Capitals suffered early setbacks as Shafali Verma and Lizelle Lee departed inside the Powerplay, leaving the chase wobbling from the outset.

The middle order failed to stitch together meaningful partnerships, and despite a few starts, DC slipped to 100 for 6 in the 15th over as Gujarat's bowlers, led by Rajeshwari Gayakwad and Devine, kept the pressure firmly on the batting side.

The match, however, took a dramatic turn when Sneh Rana and Niki Prasad launched a spirited counter-attack, dragging Delhi back into contention. After 20 runs came off Ashleigh Gardner's 19th over, DC needed nine from the final six balls. In a tense last over filled with twists, Sophie Devine held her nerve and dismissed Prasad off the final ball, sealing a three-run win for Gujarat Giants.

Sent in to bat, veteran Australian keeper-batter Mooney struck a measured 58 off 46 balls, while Anushka Sharma made 39 off 25 deliveries.

GG lost Sophie Devine (13) early before skipper Mooney and Sharma (39 off 25) stitched 54 runs for the second wicket to give some momentum to the innings.

Brief scores: Gujarat Giants: 174/9 in 20 overs (Beth Mooney 58, Anushka Sharma 39; Chinelle Henry 2-38, Shree Charani 4-31) bt Delhi Capitals: 171/8 in 20 overs (Niki Prasad 47, Sneh Rana 29; Rajeshwari Gayakwad 3-20, Sophie Devine 4-37). **Result:** GG won by 3 runs. **PoM:** Sophie Devine.

Gujarat Giants' Sophie Devine attempts to run out Delhi Capitals' Sneh Rana during their WPL match in Vadodara on Tuesday. PTI

BGS NPS clinch KM Ramprasad Shield

BENGALURU, DHNS

Vedanth Vedanarayanan and Yaeesh Rahaman shone with the ball as BGS National Public School defeated School Vivekananda by 48 runs to clinch the KM Ramprasad Shield under-16 inter-school 2nd Division title here.

Asked to bat first, BGS made a promising start through openers Ankit V Onkar (41) and Sai Rochan J (36). But once Onkar departed in the 14th over, the BGS innings fell apart as they kept losing wickets at regular intervals to be bowled out for 218 in 38.5 overs.

S Lavith Nischal (2/49), G Krishav (2/28) and Dhruv Acharya H (2/36) bagged two wickets apiece to maintain the pressure on BGS lads.

BGS needed an even stronger bowling performance if they were to nick School Vivekananda, and Vedanth Vedanarayanan (4/19) and Yaeesh Rahaman (3/15) put their hands up in fine fashion.

BGS National Public School, winners of the KM Ramprasad Shield under-16 inter-school 2nd Division title. SITTING (from left): Lokesh Naik (coach), Naveen Kumar TR (head coach), Dr Malini M Dutta (principal), Dr Rameshkumar Durairaju (sports co-ordinator). MIDDLE ROW: Aditya LM, Sameer Hedge, Akhilesh Pradhan, Vaibhav Satish, Jasim Rahaman, Pratham Rao. BACK ROW: Abhinav SS, Ankit V Onkar, Anuj V Onkar, Sai Rochan J, Yashas Reddi (Captain), Vedanth Vedanarayanan, Yaeesh Rahaman, Krishang Sangeeta Rao, Thanav A, Sachin Diggavi.

From the moment Vedanth skittled opener Vidharth P in the seventh over, BGS kept going at School Vivenkananda, eventually bowling them out for 170 in 39.1 overs.

Brief scores: BGS National Public School: 218 all out in 38.5 overs (Ankit V Onkar 41, Sai Rochan J 36, Pratham Rao 28, Krishang Sangeeta Rao 30; S Lavith Nischal 2-49, G Krishav 2-28, Dhruv Acharya H 2-36) bt School Vivekananda: 170 all out in 39.1 overs (Nakul R Sagar 27, Dhruv Acharya H 25; Vedanth Vedanarayanan 4-19, Yaeesh Rahaman 3-15).

Brook blitz seals series for England in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, AFP: Harry Brook's blistering 57-ball hundred proved the difference as England romped to a famous 53-run victory over Sri Lanka on Tuesday to clinch the series and end the hosts' five-year-long unbeaten ODI home run.

Sri Lanka had gone 12 series unbeaten at home, winning 11 and drawing one, but Brook's counter-punch knocked them off their perch and swung the momentum decisively England's way.

Chasing a daunting 358, the hosts came out all guns blazing, racing to 104 inside ten overs.

But once the field spread, the boundaries dried up.

In a bid to keep up with the required run-rate, Sri Lanka's batters took the aerial route and paid the price, as England snapped up catches with sharp work in the deep. Pavan Rathnayake stood tall amid the collapse, unfurling a maiden ton.

Brief scores: England: 357/3 in 50 overs (Joe Root 111 n.o., Jacob Bethell 65, Harry Brook 136 n.o.) bt Sri Lanka: 304 all out in 46.4 overs (Pathum Nissanka 50, Pavan Rathnayake 121; Jamie Overton 2-48, Liam Dawson 2-48, Will Jacks 2-43, Adil Rashid 2-61). **Result:** England won by 53 runs. **Series:** England won 2-1. **PoM:** Harry Brook. **PoS:** Joe Root.

India U-19 inflict massive 204-run defeat on Zimbabwe

BULAWAYO (ZIMBABWE), PTI: Young middle-order batter Vihaan Malhotra showed admirable composure to rediscover his touch and compile a fine century, while Abhigyan Kundu extended his sublime run of form as India stormed to a commanding 204-run victory over Zimbabwe in their opening Super Six match of the U-19 World Cup here on Tuesday.

India, after an all-win group-stage campaign in which they emphatically defeated the USA, Bangladesh, and New Zealand, continued their aggressive brand of cricket to pile up a mammoth 352/8.

The innings was anchored by Malhotra's cautious yet confident unbeaten 109 (107) while Kundu chipped in with a fluent 61 (62 balls, 5x4, 1x6), as the hapless Zimbabwe bowlers were taken apart with alarming ease.

India's pace-bowling duo didn't let up, as RS Ambrish (2/19) and Henil Patel (1/25) bowled the first nine overs in tandem to completely overwhelm the Zimbabwean batters, reducing them to 24 for 3 by the ninth over. Zimbabwe were eventually bundled out for 148 in 37.4 overs, giving India a superb start to their Super Six campaign.

India now have six points and are on top of Group 2 of the Super Six.

Brief scores: India 352/8 in 50 overs (Vaibhav Suryavanshi 52, Vihaan Malhotra 109 n.o., Abhigyan Kundu 61, Khilan Patel 30; Panashe Mazai 2-86, Tatenda Chimugoro 3-49, Simbarashe Mudzengerere 2-51) bt Zimbabwe 148 all out in 37.4 overs (Kian Blignaut 37, Leeroy Chiwaula 62; RS Ambrish 2-19, Udhav Mohan 3-20, Ayush Mhatre 3-14) by 204 runs. **Result:** India won by 204 runs. **PoM:** Vihaan Malhotra. **India's next match:** Pakistan (February 1).

India's Vihaan Malhotra reacts after scoring a century against Zimbabwe in Bulawayo on Tuesday. ICC

Ravishankar Vidyamandir, East in final

BENGALURU, DHNS: Tejasvi Sharma picked up a four-for while Kodatala Sai Shravan Reddy returned a three-wicket haul as Sri Sri Ravishankar Vidyamandir, East eased to a comfortable eight-wicket victory over Ebenezer International School in the semifinals of the KSCA under-14 II division school tournament for the BT Ramaiah Shield here.

LOCAL CRICKET

Tejasvi was the pick of the bowlers with figures of 4/28 while Shravan ably supported his team-mate with 3/29 as Ravishankar Vidyamandir, East shot out Ebenezer International School to a mere 108 in 40.1 overs.

Chasing a modest 109 for victory, Aarav Srivastava anchored an easy chase with an unbeaten 46 as Ravishankar Vidyamandir, East romped home in just 23.5 overs.

Brief scores: At SLS Kreedanagana: Ebenezer International School: 108 all out in 40.1 overs (Eepa Tanush 30; Kodatala Sai Shravan Reddy 3-29, Tejasvi Sharma 4-28, Daiwick Pradeep Sharma 2-10) lt to Sri Sri Ravishankar Vidyamandir, East: 110/2 in 23.5 overs (Aarav Srivastava 46 n.o.).
At BEL: The Sports School: 217/7 in 50 overs (Keshava T 38, Sai Aarush Sangati 39, Lakshit Kumar Sipani 38 n.o.; Karanveer Raj Singh 2-34) bt School Of India: 185 all out in 46 overs (Hrithvik Shetty 81, Kartikeya Singh B 26, Sai Aarush Sangati 2-38, Keshava T 2-30).

Stride FC post comeback win

BENGALURU, DHNS: Nikesh Thokchom and Albert Akouam scored a goal each as Stride FC scripted a 2-1 comeback win over FC Deccan in the BDFA A Division League Championship at the Bangalore Football Stadium here.

Results: A Division: Stride FC: 2 (Nikesh Thokchom 69th, Albert Akouam 86th) bt FC Deccan: 1 (Srujan S 17th), Real Chikkamagaluru FC: 1 (Yumnam Roland Meitei 72nd) bt Sree Gajanana FC: 0.
B Division: MD Sporting FC: 4 (Bawanlumlang Thangkhiew 5th, Thangjam Santosh 12th, Akshay VH 46th, Zeal K Rymbal 65th pen).

Dravid blames spin troubles on lack of turnaround time

BENGALURU, DHNS

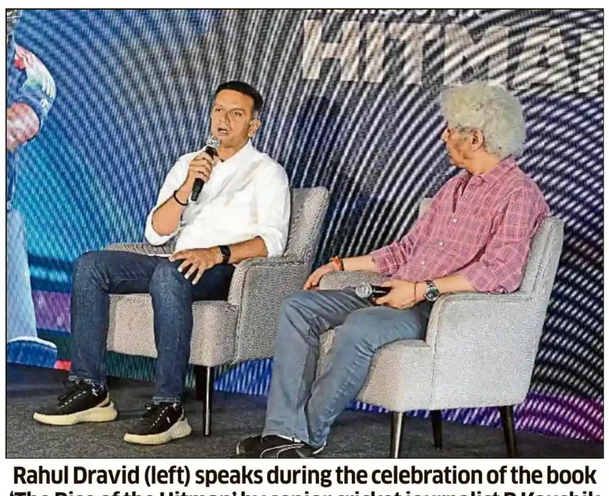
Once renowned for playing spin, Indian batsmen now are often found struggling against the turning ball, be it Tests or one-dayers. Once dubbed Tigers at home, a near-unshakable force, India lost 3-0 to New Zealand in 2024 and 2-0 to South Africa last year – both in Tests.

This month, they lost 2-1 to New Zealand in the ODI series – first time they suffered a series defeat against the Kiwis in 50-over bilateral rubbers. So why has the current generation lost the art of playing spin? Former India coach Rahul Dravid, one of the greatest batters of all time, blamed it on the lack of turnaround time between formats.

"One of the things I've noticed even as a coach, especially the guys who are playing all the three formats, they're just moving from one format to the other all the time," Dravid said on Tuesday at an event celebrating the book on Rohit Sharma 'The Rise of the Hitman' by senior cricket journalist R Kaushik.

"We would make it to a Test series (about) three or four days before the (first) game. When we started practising for the Test match, we realised that the last time some of us played red-ball cricket was four or five months ago. Whereas in my generation, there were only two formats in the game. I remember having the whole month preparing for a Test series.

"So, I think, that's becoming really a challenge. How do you find the time to be able to develop some of the skills that are hard? I think Shubman (Gill) has kind of alluded to it a little bit just recently. Because I think he's the one who's experienced that, he's the one who's actually played recently for us in all of the formats."



Rahul Dravid (left) speaks during the celebration of the book 'The Rise of the Hitman' by senior cricket journalist R Kaushik in Bengaluru on Tuesday.

The T20 World Cup is scheduled to start on February 8 where Indians are the favourites to defend the crown. Dravid, whose last assignment with the Indian team was the 2024 T20 World Cup triumph, felt the Men In Blue are the team to beat given their smashing form in the shortest format.

"India are playing T20 cricket at a different level than most teams. They have had an 80% success rate in the last few years, which is amazing in a format that has so many ups and downs. They clearly start as favorites and they will make it to the semifinals but as I have learned to my bitter disappointment, it's about the better team on the day. Anybody can play a good knock and upset you."

Dravid credited former captain Rohit for bringing a tectonic change in India's approach in limited-overs cricket. "There was a feeling that we were slightly behind in white-ball cricket and needed to push the envelope a little more. Run rates were going up, risk-taking was increasing, and we needed to adapt to that reality.

"What was brilliant was that Rohit took the lead immediately. He took responsibility for setting the tempo himself, rather than asking others to do it. When your leader stands up and says, 'I will do this, even if it comes at the cost of my average or my personal numbers,' it becomes much easier to pass that message through the team."

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